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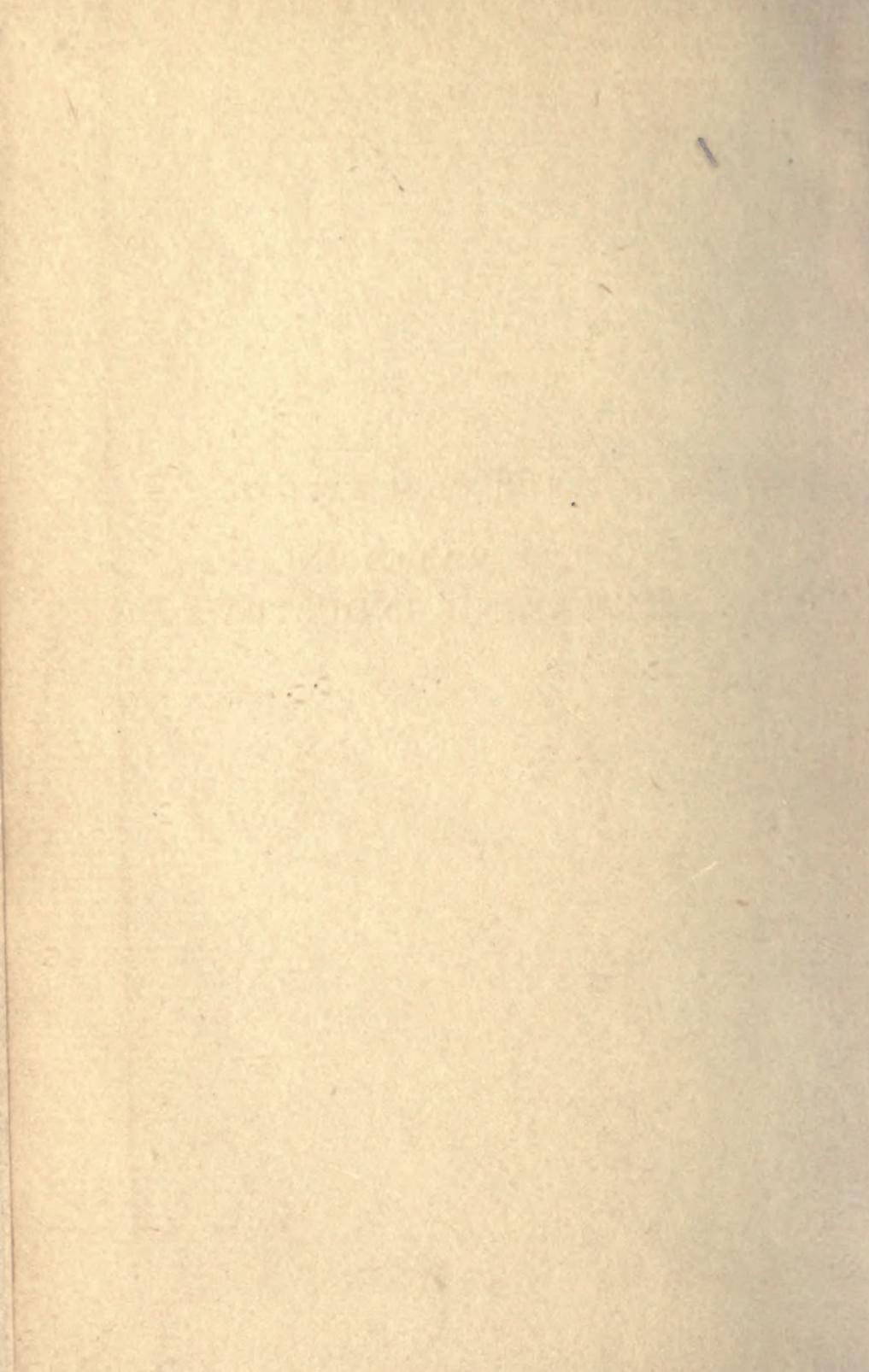
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STUDIES IN THE MINIMUM WAGE—III

MINIMUM RATES IN
THE BOXMAKING INDUSTRY

THE BANKING INDUSTRY
IN THE UNITED STATES

THE RATAN TATA FOUNDATION
(UNIVERSITY OF LONDON)

STUDIES IN THE
MINIMUM WAGE—No. III

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
LEGAL MINIMUM RATES IN THE
BOXMAKING INDUSTRY
UNDER THE TRADE BOARDS ACT OF 1909

BY

M. E. BULKLEY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

R. H. TAWNEY



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BOX-MARKING OF COUNTRY

Under the Trade Mark

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INTRODUCTION

THIS Report is the third of a series designed to throw light on some of the attempts which have recently been made to establish and enforce minimum standards of payment. Previous publications of this Foundation have discussed the working of the Trade Boards established under the Trade Boards Act of 1909 for the establishment of minimum rates in the chainmaking industry and the readymade and wholesale tailoring trade.¹ Our present monograph is intended to supplement them by setting out the effects, so far as they can be ascertained, of the minimum rates fixed for workers engaged in the manufacture of paper, cardboard, and chip boxes. The Report was written in the early autumn of 1914, the evidence on which it is based having been mainly collected between March 1913 and July 1914. The publication had to be postponed, but, in view of the abnormal conditions occasioned by the war, it seemed best to leave it unaltered and not to attempt to bring the facts up to date.

It may be well to indicate briefly the methods adopted in collecting evidence. Besides the valuable papers in the possession of the Trade Board, to which access was kindly allowed us, information was sought by personal interviews with employers and workers (including em-

¹ *The Establishment of Minimum Rates in the Chainmaking Industry*, 1914, price 1s. 6d., and *The Establishment of Minimum Rates in the Tailoring Industry*, 1915, price 3s. 6d. (G. Bell & Sons, Ltd.)

ployers and workers who were members of the Trade Board), inspectors, and others having knowledge of the working of the Trade Boards Act. In all, out of the thousand employers in the industry, some hundred and ten were interviewed, by ourselves or by our investigators, mainly in London and Birmingham, but also in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, Nottingham and Norwich, and a few in other parts of the country. The firms visited covered every branch of the industry, ranging from factories employing several hundred workers to small workshops employing half a dozen or so. Of factory workers only some thirty or forty were visited, a number far too small, of course, to yield results of any statistical value; nevertheless, the information so gained was important as serving to corroborate or modify impressions gained from other evidence, and as showing the workers' point of view. In addition, some 370 homeworkers were seen, mostly in London. It is obvious that with information so obtained, allowance must be made for the bias both of the informant and of the investigator. But care was taken to weigh statements and where possible to check them from other sources. We feel, therefore, that though the results may be lacking in precision, they may be taken as giving a substantially accurate picture of the state of affairs.

It was especially with regard to the effect of the Trade Board on the earnings of the workers that the difficulty of securing adequate statistical information was felt. In the boxmaking industry, as in the tailoring industry, most of the workers are piece-workers, the piece-rates vary largely from one firm to another and the Trade Board did not fix minimum piece-rates, but only a minimum time-

rate. It is not, therefore, possible to state with any precision the extent of the advance in wages brought about by the Trade Board's determinations without the aid of complete returns based upon the wage-sheets of numerous employers, which it is beyond the reach of the private inquirer to obtain. On the other hand, though our information with regard to workers' earnings is defective, the experience of the boxmaking industry, like that of the tailoring industry, throws considerable light upon the reactions which follow the establishment of legal minimum rates. It will be noted that there is little evidence of the advance in wages causing dismissals, and that, according to the statements of employers, the extra cost involved has in several cases been met by the better organisation of businesses. It would appear, indeed, that the trade has had no difficulty in accommodating itself to the minimum rates fixed by the Trade Board, and that there is little foundation for the views of those who regard the establishment of a minimum wage as likely to impose an excessive burden upon industry. The truth is that the minimum wage, at any rate as applied hitherto, is a much less drastic measure than its critics—or even its advocates—sometimes seem to suppose. While it protects the worst paid workers against exploitation, it does little to alter the distribution of wealth. The mere fact that it is a minimum means that it has but a slight effect on the better paid districts of the industry, and the real criticism to be brought against the proceedings of the Boxmaking, as of the Tailoring, Trade Board is, not that it has fixed the minimum rates too high, but that it has fixed them considerably below what many employers were already paying without difficulty before the Trade Board was established.

It remains for us to thank the numerous persons who have been kind enough to assist us with information. We are under many obligations to members of the Box Trade Board and to the officials of the Trade Boards Office, in particular to Mr. Ernest Aves, the Chairman, and to the Secretary, Mr. G. T. Reid. For information as to the effect of the minimum rates in various districts we are indebted to Miss Wilson, Miss Wetherall, and Miss Robinson for information as to Birmingham, to Miss Gibbons and Miss Jowett for information about Bristol, and to Miss V. de Vesselitsky, Mr. G. D. Turner and Miss E. Ross, who made inquiries for us in London; as well as to employers and workers too numerous to mention, all of whom we desire to thank now. We owe special acknowledgments to Miss de Vesselitsky; she carried out the difficult investigations into the conditions of homeworkers in London, upon which Chapter VI is based. We are also greatly indebted to Miss L. Wyatt Papworth, Secretary of the Women's Industrial Council, for giving us access to the information collected in an inquiry made by them in 1907.

R. H. TAWNEY.

September 1915.

MINIMUM RATES IN THE BOXMAKING INDUSTRY

I

THE ORGANISATION OF THE BOXMAKING INDUSTRY

THE boxmaking industry, the second of the trades which were scheduled under the Trade Boards Act of 1909, is a comparatively small industry, though, with the increasing tendency to use boxes, it has expanded considerably in recent years. At the present time it employs some thirty or forty thousand persons, the great majority of whom are women and girls.¹

¹ According to the census of 1911, 11,758 males and 43,649 females were employed in England and Wales in the making of paper boxes and bags and in stationery manufacture. Of these, 4,068 males and 26,501 females were definitely returned as cardboard box makers; 1,098 males and 8,602 females were returned as envelope or paper bag makers; the remaining 6,592 males and 8,546 females were not classified. The total number of cardboard box makers must therefore lie somewhere between 4,068 and 10,660 males and 26,501 and 35,047 females, probably nearer the first than the second figure in each case (Census of England and Wales, 1911, Vol. X, Part II, p. 6). These numbers include, of course, employers as well as workers. In Scotland the number of paper bag and cardboard box makers was 348 males and 2,904 females (Census of Scotland, 1911, Vol. II, p. lxxxii). In March 1914, according to returns made to the Trade Board by some 850 out of the 1000 employers in Great Britain, 3,999 males and 26,231 females were employed in the making of cardboard boxes. The employers who did not furnish returns were those who did not apply for certificates since they did not employ learners; they were therefore mostly the smaller men, and it is probably safe to assume that those making returns represent more than 85 per cent. of the trade. In 1901 the number of paper box and bag makers combined in Great Britain was 3,544 males and 27,894 females, so that the number employed in boxmaking must have increased considerably (Census of England and Wales, 1901, Summary Tables, pp. 196, 197; Census of Scotland, 1911, Vol. II, p. lxxxii).

The total gross output, according to the Census of Production of 1907, was something over £2,276,000,¹ but it has probably increased considerably since that date.

Since boxes are generally bulky articles, the cost of freightage is heavy compared with the value, and the export trade is therefore comparatively insignificant. In 1913 only 47,732 cwts. of "boxes and cartons of paper and cardboard" were exported, to the value of £83,345.² For the same reason it is impracticable, except in the case of small boxes, to send them long distances by rail within the country itself, and the box factories are, to a large extent, localised in the neighbourhood of the factories which produce the goods which are to be "boxed." Lace boxes, for instance, are made at Nottingham; boot boxes at Norwich and in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire; corset boxes, glove boxes and hosiery boxes also in the latter district. A special feature of the boxmaking industry are the "non-competitive" firms. It frequently happens that a factory, a boot factory for instance, or a sweet-making factory, will have a department for making boxes for its own goods. Boxmaking, again, is often combined with printing; the machinery for cutting the board and paper for the boxes is practically the same as that used in a printing works, and the printing required on the boxes can be done on the spot.

The distribution of the boxmaking industry, so far as the returns for each county show the number engaged in boxmaking, as distinct from those employed in paper bag

¹ Census of Production, 1907, pp. 615-6,642. This figure does not include the value of the cardboard boxes made by manufacturers in other trades and used for packing their own goods; a certain proportion of the output of cardboard boxes was also included in the returns of manufacturing stationers who returned the value of all their products in one total.

² Annual Statement of the Trade of the United Kingdom for 1913, p. 445. It is impossible to tell from the returns how far the export trade is growing, since prior to 1911 boxes and cartons of paper were not separately enumerated. For 1911 and 1912 the exports were 34,530 cwts. (£63,419) and 45,962 cwts. (£83,609).

making and stationery manufacture generally, can be seen from the following figures taken from the Census of 1911.¹

TABLE I
Numbers employed in Boxmaking.

District.	Numbers employed.	
	Male.	Female.
London	1518	9712
Liverpool, Birkenhead, Manchester and Salford	319	2925
Bristol	256	2387
Birmingham	130	2334
Leicester and Northamptonshire	253	1477
Nottingham	257	974
Norwich	35	332

As has already been stated, boxmaking is predominantly a woman's industry. The cutting of the cardboard is mainly done by men, but the making up of the boxes is performed by women and girls (except in the Jewish workshops, where men are often employed in making up as well as in cutting). The proportion of male to female workers seems to be roughly about two to thirteen.

The great majority of the women are single. Of the 26,501 female boxmakers in 1911 only 4,920, or 18·5 per cent., were married or widowed. The proportion is larger than this in some districts. At Leicester and Nottingham, for instance, where there is a great demand for female labour in the various factories, and where it is difficult to obtain enough young girls, 26·3 per cent. and 19·8 per cent. respectively are married women and 1·8 per cent. and 5·2 per cent. are widowed. And in London, where there are numbers of homeworkers, the proportion is 24 per cent. married and 7 per cent. widowed.

¹ Census, 1911, Vol. X, Part II, *passim*. A considerable number of boxmakers are employed in Yorkshire also, but they are not separately enumerated in the Census.

In the organisation of the industry the most varying types are to be found, from the homeworker, engaged in making generally the smaller and cheaper kinds of boxes, with no appliances but a pair of scissors and a glueboard, to the worker in a well-equipped factory fitted with all the most recent machinery, where the work is minutely sectionalised. Till the last few years boxmaking was, at any rate in London (which seems to have been behind the provinces in this respect), very largely a hand industry. At the time of the inquiry made by the Women's Industrial Council in 1907, though the "guillotine" had long been in use for cutting the board, and machines had also been introduced for scoring, for wirestitching, and, comparatively recently, for "cornering" and "thumbholing," the covering was still very largely done by hand.¹ Since that date a great variety of machines have been introduced. But handwork still exists alongside machinery throughout the trade. Fancy boxes, such as expensive chocolate boxes, are made throughout by handworkers, the work requiring great skill and necessitating a long training. With the commoner class of box, boot boxes, blouse boxes and the like, the question whether they are to be hand-made or machine-made depends largely on the size of the order. When large orders are received and boxes can be made to stock, machinery can be profitably used; if the orders are small the boxes will be made by hand. In Nottingham, where it is the custom for the lace manufacturers to order boxes in very small quantities, an order for two or three boxes at a time being quite common, the use of machinery in boxworks which cater for the lace trade is impracticable; the whole box, after the board has been cut out by the cutter, is completed by one woman. The cheapest kinds of boxes, such as match boxes, are made both by hand by homeworkers, and also by machinery in the factory.

¹ Report on Boxmaking Enquiry, in *Women's Industrial News*, September 1908, p. 61.

What proportion of the trade is carried on in workshops and factories respectively it is difficult to say. In 1907, 2,326 males and 12,046 females were returned as employed in factories in the United Kingdom. These returns, however, were not complete. Besides the 13 out of the 327 factories who failed to send particulars, the returns apparently do not include the workers employed in the boxmaking departments of factories mainly devoted to the production of other goods.¹ In the same year 334 males and 1,635 females were returned as employed in workshops.² Here the returns are probably still less complete; 15 of the 132 workshops known to the Home Office failed to make returns, and there were probably a number of workshops which were not known to the Home Office. According to the Census of Production in the same year, in the firms from whom particulars were obtained, 17,601 workers were employed in factories and 3,767 in workshops.³ In addition to the workers employed in factories and workshops there are the homeworkers, who number roughly about 2000.⁴ It is to be remarked that these homeworkers are not distributed equally all over the country; they are, in fact, confined practically entirely to two large centres, London and Birmingham.⁵ They are employed almost invariably directly by the firm which gives

¹ Summary of returns of persons employed in 1907 in the Non-Textile Factories (Cd. 5398 of 1910), p. 7.

² Summary of returns of persons employed in 1907 in Workshops (Cd. 5883 of 1911), p. 7.

³ Census of Production, 1907, p. 644. It is probable that the number of workshops omitted from this census exceeded the number of factories omitted.

⁴ According to the returns made to the Trade Board in March 1912, there were about 2,030 homeworkers. This number can only be considered as approximate. On the one hand, some employers sent no returns. On the other, some workers who took out work from more than one employer would appear on more than one list; to set against these, however, there would be the cases where women share work, but only the woman who actually fetches the work from the employer is returned as a homeworker. Probably the number returned is an under-estimate.

⁵ See *post*, p. 64.

out the work. In the tailoring industry the task of the Trade Board is rendered more difficult by the presence of numbers of middlemen who take out work from an employer and pass it on to homeworkers or to other middlemen, the work sometimes passing through several hands before it ultimately reaches the homeworker. In the boxmaking industry this difficulty does not occur, for the middleman is practically unknown.

II

THE WORK OF THE BOX TRADE BOARD

(i) THE CONSTITUTION AND PROCEDURE OF THE BOARD

THE Trade Board in the boxmaking trade, as at first constituted, consisted of thirty-five persons, sixteen representatives of employers, sixteen representatives of workers, and three members appointed by the Board of Trade. Under Section 11 (3) of the Trade Boards Act the representative members of a Trade Board may be appointed either by election or by nomination. In the chainmaking industry the members of the Board were elected by the employers and workers respectively; in the tailoring industry both sides were nominated by the Board of Trade. In the boxmaking trade the members were appointed partly by one method, partly by the other, the employers' representatives being elected by the employers in the several districts into which the country was divided, while the representatives of the workers, among whom there was little organisation, were nominated by the Board of Trade.¹ Later, three additional employers were nominated by the Board of Trade, to represent "non-competitive" firms (*i.e.* firms engaged in making boxes

¹ Regulations by Board of Trade establishing a Trade Board for making boxes in Great Britain, April 27, 1910. In the case of the Box Trade Board for Ireland, both employers' and workers' representatives were elected by their respective constituents (Regulations by Board of Trade establishing a Trade Board for Boxmaking in Ireland, August 23, 1910).

for their own use), firms engaged in printing and allied trades but also making boxes, and matchbox-making firms; three additional representatives of workers were also nominated. The Trade Board thus consists of forty-one persons.

Under Section 12 (1) of the Trade Boards Act a Trade Board may establish District Trade Committees, consisting partly of its own members, partly of local employers and workers, in such areas as it may think fit, subject to regulations by the Board of Trade determining their constitution. Since the boxmaking industry, like the tailoring industry, is not localised but is scattered over the country, the Trade Board decided that it was desirable that such District Trade Committees should be established. Nine committees were accordingly formed, consisting usually of four or six of the members of the Trade Board, representing employers and workers in equal proportions, two appointed members, and five or six local employers, with the same number of local workers.¹ As was pointed out in the Report on the Tailoring Industry, it seems to have been contemplated by the framers of the Trade Boards Act that the District Trade Committees would have considerable power. A Trade Board may refer to them for their report and recommendations any matter which it thinks expedient so to refer, and may also delegate any of its powers and duties, other than the fixing of a minimum time-rate or general minimum piece-rates. It is the duty of the District Trade Committees to recommend to the Trade Board minimum time-rates and, so far as they think fit, minimum piece-rates applicable to the trade in their area. Through their standing sub-committees the District Trade Committees have to consider applications for special minimum piece-rates and complaints under Section

¹ The London District Trade Committee is composed of twenty-nine members, *i.e.* eight members of the Trade Board representing employers and workers, three appointed members and eighteen representatives of local employers and workers.

10 of the Act.¹ In practice, however, the activities of the District Committees amount to very little. They have never, for instance, initiated proposals for fixing minimum rates, but merely consider and report on proposals referred to them by the Trade Board. Their meetings are held infrequently; most of them have only met four times since the Trade Board was established. The minutes of all are very similar, the same resolution often being passed by one Committee after another. This comparative impotence of the District Committees is partly due to the fact that the leading members of the Trade Board are on nearly all the Committees. They naturally do not wish to weaken their case on the Board by making concessions on a District Committee. Hence questions are very rarely pushed to a vote. The decisions of the District Committees are, for instance, generally in the form that the employers' representatives recommend one minimum rate, and that the workers' representatives recommend another. But, though no important questions have been decided by the District Committees, they would appear on the whole to be worth retaining, for two reasons. In the first place, the discussions at the meetings of these committees often throw valuable light on the local conditions of the industry, and give an opportunity for the expression of such local feeling as may exist. In the second place, they enable a larger number of persons to take part in the administration of the Act. In a district where employers and workers are on a local committee there is less likelihood of the Trade Board's determinations being evaded; the representative employers are naturally anxious to keep other employers up to the mark, while the workers have a channel through which they can give information as to any infraction of the law. This point is of special importance owing to the fact that there is practically no organisation among the women workers,

¹ Trade Boards Act, 1909, Section 12 (2), (3), (4).

and that, therefore, little assistance in detecting evasion of the Act can be sought from Trade Unionism.

In the chain trade and the tailoring trade the formation of a Trade Board was complicated by the existence of middlemen who, while they were, on the one hand, employers themselves, were also, on the other, employees of the factory occupiers. In the boxmaking trade this difficulty did not occur and the two sides on the Trade Board are much more homogeneous than in either of the other two trades. In order to preserve equality of voting the Board of Trade regulations lay down that, "if at any meeting . . . the number of members present, representing employers and workers respectively, are unequal, it shall be open to the side which is in the majority to arrange that one or more of their members shall refrain from voting, so as to secure equality. Failing such an arrangement, the chairman may, if he thinks it desirable, adjourn the voting on any question to another meeting."¹ Since the two sides are compact there is no possibility of cross-voting, as on the Chain Trade Board. The power of the appointed members is therefore very considerable, since they have the determining voice on all questions on which employers and workers fail to come to an agreement.

(ii) THE FIXING OF MINIMUM RATES

The proceedings of the Box Trade Board, as of the Chain and Tailoring Boards, were characterised by great deliberation. The first meeting was held on August 11, 1910, but it was not till March 11, 1912, that the rates for female workers were finally fixed, and these rates did not become obligatory till September 12, 1912. The rates for male workers were not fixed till January 6, 1913, and did not become obligatory till July 7, 1913.

The actual fixing of minimum rates was not the only

¹ Regulations by Board of Trade establishing a Trade Board for making Boxes in Great Britain, April 27, 1910.

business to be performed by the Trade Board. The Board had to determine the limits of its operations; what kinds of articles were to be included under the definition "boxes or parts thereof made wholly or partly of Paper, Cardboard, Chip or similar material," and what classes of workers were to be considered as makers of such boxes, a task of some complexity and one involving decisions in innumerable special cases.¹ It had to ascertain, if possible, the numbers of firms and of workers engaged in the trade. It had to provide for the formation of District Trade Committees and to receive reports from these Committees.

The question of the minimum rate for female workers was brought forward at the first meeting. The workers proposed that the rate for adult women should be 5d. This motion was lost and the employers moved that the rate should not exceed 3d.; on an amendment by the workers that the rate should not be less than 3½d. the voting was equal. The appointed members were anxious not to be called upon to vote at this early stage; the resolution and amendment were therefore sent down to the District Trade Committees for discussion, with a statement that there

¹ Were the minimum rates applicable, for instance, to the cases of "a porter employed in delivering boxes and lighting fires," "a man employed on various duties including the work of slitting and winding, scoring, and on cutting machines," "workers (employed by tool manufacturers) who occasionally use a machine for stitching box flats," "an outside porter spending part time in boxmaking processes," "the manufacture of corrugated board (in a room not used for boxmaking), part of which is used in the same factory for making boxes and part of which is sold," "a man employed in packing, dispatching and nailing up, and occasionally covering, in connection with the manufacture of boxes of strawboard and wood made to contain letter files," "a man attending kettle for workers' meals, oiling shafting and occasionally parcelling boxes, and doing odd jobs"? Such were a few of the questions which the Scope Committee had to consider at one of its meetings. Opinions expressed by the Trade Board as to the scope of the minimum rates are not legally binding. A binding determination could only be given by a Court of Law. The opinions, however, being those of an expert body—a committee, too, which aims at, and is proud of, a judicial impartiality—have been treated with respect by those to whom they have been communicated.

had been equality of voting. At the sixth meeting, on February 22, 1911, further suggestions were made for rates of $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. and 4d. by the employers and workers respectively; both proposals were negative and the question was remitted to a committee of five employers and five workers with the appointed members. On the following day a suggestion was made by the chairman, on behalf of the appointed members, that the rate should be $2\frac{3}{4}$ d. from June 1, 1911, 3d. from February 1, 1912, and $3\frac{1}{4}$ d. from February 1, 1913. This was agreed to, the employers reserving the right to reconsider the $3\frac{1}{4}$ d. rate before it was fixed. A "proposal to fix" these rates was accordingly issued on April 6, 1911. Numerous objections, however, poured in from employers during the next three months. Legal opinion was sought as to the validity of the rates proposed, and the Trade Board was advised that the fixing of a graduated rate was *ultra vires*. The "proposal to fix" was therefore withdrawn. After further discussion, proposals from the employers' side for $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. and from the workers' side for $3\frac{1}{4}$ d. having been defeated, it was finally agreed that the rate should be 3d. for adult women, learners' rates being drawn up in proportion. A second "proposal to fix" was issued September 1, 1911. A further period of three months had to be allowed for the receiving of objections. These objections were considered by the Trade Board at its meeting on December 7 and 8, 1911, when another attempt was made by the employers to get a rate of $2\frac{3}{4}$ d. substituted for 3d. This proved unsuccessful, and finally, after a consultation between representatives of the two sides and the appointed members, the employers agreed to accept the 3d. rate without further opposition. Even then, however, there was further delay, for, certain minor alterations having been made in the "proposal to fix," it was resolved that the proposal as amended should be submitted to the District Trade Committees in order that an opportunity might be given them to report upon it. Finally, on February 1, 1912, after consideration of

the reports from the District Trade Committees, the rates were fixed,¹ to come into limited operation on March 11, 1912. Six months later, September 12, 1912, they were made obligatory.²

The question of the minimum rates for male workers was not raised till July 27, 1911, when it was agreed that the District Trade Committees should be asked to consider what rates should be fixed. The reports from the Committees were considered at the meeting of the Trade Board, April 17 to 19, 1912. On the workers' side it was moved that the rate should be 7d.; on the employers', that it should be 6d.; the latter was agreed upon and rates for learners were fixed in proportion. The "proposal to fix" was issued on May 3. At the meeting on September 19 and 20 it was agreed that the rates should come into limited operation on January 6, 1913. They were made obligatory on July 7 following.³

Like the Tailoring Trade Board, the Trade Board for the boxmaking trade had to settle two important questions of principle: (1) Should there be universal minimum time-rates, or varying rates according to the different circumstances of different localities? (2) Should general minimum piece-rates be fixed or only general minimum time-rates?

At its first meeting the Trade Board recommended a

¹ Since this was written, a "proposal to vary" the rate has been made (May 1915). The rate for adult women is to be 3½d., and the rates for learners at the later periods are to be altered in accordance.

² The Trade Board for Ireland issued a "proposal to fix" rates for female workers on October 2, 1911, the rates being identical with those proposed for England the previous month. The rates, however, were reconsidered, and a second "proposal to fix" was issued May 4, 1912, in which 2½d. was substituted for 3d. and certain alterations were made in the rates for learners. This called forth an unavailing protest from the Trade Board for Great Britain (Minutes, September 19 and 20, 1912). The rates came into force on November 4, 1912, and were made obligatory on May 5, 1913.

³ The minimum rate fixed by the Trade Board for Ireland is 6d. at the age of 24 (whereas in Great Britain the same rate is payable at the age of 21). The rates for Ireland came into force on June 6 1913, and were made obligatory December 8, 1913.

universal minimum rate or rates, subject to any future evidence from any District Trade Committee that such rates were impracticable in their district. The principle of universal minimum rates was again affirmed at the sixth meeting, February 22, 1911. During the ensuing months, however, many objections were received from employers in small towns and villages all over the country, urging that differential rates should be fixed. Finally, on March 14, 1912, a deputation of provincial box manufacturers waited on the Board of Trade and the whole matter was discussed at the meeting of the Trade Board on July 26, 1912.

The arguments brought forward were very similar to those adduced by the provincial employers in the tailoring trade and have already been analysed at some length in the monograph dealing with that industry. We need, therefore, do no more than briefly examine them. They resolved themselves into two. In the first place, it was urged that the cost of living was lower in the country districts than in London and other large centres, and that the workers did not, therefore, require such high wages. "We contend," wrote a firm in Staffordshire, "that a female boxmaker in a small town like this is far better off with her 11s. 3d. per week than a boxmaker in large centres, London, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow and similar places with, say, 15s. per week. . . . Boxmakers here are already receiving more than their needs require. . . . If more money is *pushed* on them (you can use no other term) they will lose more time." The employers seem to have based their estimate of the workers' needs to a large extent on the amount which it was customary for the girls to pay their mothers for board and lodging, a payment which, it need hardly be pointed out, was by no means necessarily an indication of the real "cost of living" in the locality. As a matter of fact an attempt to fix differential minimum rates in accordance with the cost of living in different districts would have led to results which would have been

far from acceptable to the employers in the smaller towns. According to the statistics collected by the Board of Trade in October 1905, the cost of living was higher in such towns as Luton and Ipswich, where employers were asking for lower rates, than in Leeds, Manchester or Liverpool, and a higher rate of wages would therefore have had to be fixed.

The second argument put forward by the employers, and one on which they laid greater stress, was the disadvantages under which the country employer laboured. He had to pay more for the carriage of his raw material and more for the carriage of the finished product. The supply of skilled labour on which he could draw was far smaller than in the larger centres and the labour was not so efficient; there were fewer opportunities of spending money and the girls had less incentive to work at high pressure. For these reasons the employers urged that a universal rate was inequitable. "To raise our minimum rates for journeywomen above 2½d.," objected an employer in the Midlands, "without raising the present rate of 3d. (paid at present by all well-known boxmakers in London and other large towns), will slowly and surely undermine our business. . . . A universal minimum rate of 2½d. would leave us and the well-established City boxmakers exactly as at present, but a universal minimum rate of 3d. would cost us £3000 per year and the City boxmakers nothing." "To fix differential rates," wrote another employer, "would not be fixing a scale in favour of the smaller towns, but if done equitably would be preserving the existing balance. Universal rates would unquestionably be making an alteration to the advantage of the manufacturers in the large towns at the expense of those in the smaller ones." With many of the employers, however, the quarrel was not really with a universal rate, but with a high rate, as is clearly shown by an objection sent from a small Staffordshire town where the employers, after protesting against a universal rate, naïvely remark, "We

are sure the workers in the large cities will not abide by the same, as they will soon point out the extra expenses they are put to, viz. tram or train fares . . . and will want extra pay to put them on the same level as their co-workers in the country districts." The reluctance of employers to agree to a 3d. rate was all the greater where the boxmaking was only subsidiary to other manufactures carried on by them, and where a rise in wages in the boxmaking department would, they feared, unsettle the girls in the other departments and cause demands for higher wages in them also.

The Trade Board adhered to its opinion that the rate must be a universal one. Even if differentiation had been considered theoretically desirable, it would have been impracticable. Moreover, to have allowed the country employers to compensate themselves for their greater expenses by the underpayment of labour would have been to countenance a continuance of the evils which the Trade Board was designed to suppress. But the Board did not consider that the employers had proved their case. The differences in freight on raw material as between one town and another were comparatively small, and it would be extremely difficult to make so minute an adjustment of wages as to counterbalance them. With regard to the freight on the finished articles, the high cost of carriage was undoubtedly a great disadvantage to an employer in his efforts to compete in other localities. On the other hand, it afforded him protection from the competition of other centres in his own district. In the matter of rent, the country employer had, of course, a decided advantage. The finished products being, in the boxmaking industry, mostly bulky, the question of space was of considerable importance and it was desirable to have the work done on the same level as far as possible. The country employer could afford to build his factory in one or two storeys; in the large centres this was generally impossible and expense was entailed in the moving of material from one floor to

another. Moreover, the general establishment charges were frequently less in the country.

With regard to the supply of workers the country employers were in reality in some respects in a better position than the employers in the large centres. Everywhere the masters were complaining of the difficulty of obtaining sufficient workers, particularly those with experience, and this difficulty was felt especially in towns where there were many alternative employments for women and girls. In many of the small towns there were few such openings and the employer had little difficulty in obtaining workers. For the same reason he suffered less from an inconvenience frequently experienced by boxmakers in the large towns—namely, the departure of their girls to other occupations just when they were becoming useful at boxmaking.¹ As to the efficiency of the workers, the Trade Board was of opinion that this depended far more on the nature of the management of the business than on the size of the town. It cannot be denied that, generally speaking, the standard of efficiency is lower in the south and south-east, *i. e.* in the districts where wages are relatively low, than in the north, where wages are relatively high. But what the protesting employers did not realise was that inefficiency was a necessary concomitant of low wages and that so long as wages continued at a low level no great efficiency would be attained.²

¹ For some statistics as to the number of young girls who leave the trade after a short period and enter some other occupation, see *post*, pp. 34, 55-57.

² One employer actually urged the fact that "inefficiency and poverty are twin sisters" as a reason for fixing a lower minimum rate. He produced information showing that, out of eight pieceworkers (over eighteen years of age) who earned least in one department, their earnings ranging from 7s. 11d. to 10s. 4d., no less than six came from poor homes and had to assist in maintaining aged or invalid parents. Thus, he pointed out, the workers who needed the work most were those who were worth least, and they would have to be dismissed if a minimum of 3d. an hour was fixed. The other side of the question, that these girls were inefficient because their earnings were so low that they could not possibly secure the minimum necessary for physical health, apparently did not occur to him.

The second question which the Trade Board had to determine was, should general minimum piece-rates be fixed or only general minimum time-rates? In the box-making industry piecework is the rule, as far as adult women are concerned.¹ The Board, however, has so far only fixed a general minimum time-rate. In thus confining its determination it was governed by the exigencies of the case. The workers' representatives would have welcomed the establishment of general minimum piece-rates, and if they could have been fixed the task of administration would have been greatly simplified and the opportunities for evasion of the Act greatly reduced. But the number of different varieties of boxes was so large, and the processes of making them were so numerous and varied so much from one firm to another,² that it was considered impracticable to fix general minimum piece-rates.

The Trade Board can, however, fix special minimum piece-rates. The power to do this is given by Section 4 (5) of the Act. "A Trade Board shall, on the application of any employer, fix a special minimum piece-rate to apply as respects the persons employed by him in cases to which a minimum time-rate but no general minimum piece-rate is applicable, and may as they think fit cancel or vary any such rate either on the application of the employer or after notice to the employer." This provision was designed to protect employers in cases where they cannot be sure that their piece-rates will yield the minimum time-rate to their workers. Where homeworkers are employed, for instance,

¹ According to the Report on Earnings and Hours of Labour in 1906, of the 2,934 women about whom particulars were obtained, 2,052, or 69·9 per cent., were on piecework; of the 1,701 girls under eighteen 645, or 37·9 per cent., were on piecework; of the 1,107 men and boys all but 3 per cent. were on timework (Report on Earnings and Hours of Labour in 1906, Vol. VIII, p. 70). In London the proportion of pieceworkers among the women was 76·8 per cent., and in the north and west Midlands 79·7 per cent.

² In one factory, for instance, the number of different operations reached four figures, and in many cases were peculiar to that factory.

it is impossible to ascertain how many hours they work and what hourly rate they earn. The employer may therefore request the Trade Board to fix special minimum piece-rates for his factory and thus relieve himself of the responsibility of determining whether or not his rates are sufficient. When such rates have been fixed he need no longer concern himself with the amount his workers earn. So long as he pays the rates laid down by the Board he is safe from prosecution. All applications for the fixing of special minimum rates are treated on their merits. They are considered first by the standing sub-committees of the District Trade Committees and are then decided by the Trade Board itself. So far special minimum piece-rates have been fixed only for three London firms, engaged in matchbox-making.

Recently another attempt has been made to fix general minimum piece-rates for homeworkers. The question was discussed by the District Trade Committees in the early part of 1913. Their reports were considered at a meeting of the Trade Board on June 4, 1913, and the matter was referred to a Joint Committee, consisting of the Administrative Committee and representatives of the London and Birmingham District Trade Committees, London and Birmingham being the areas where the majority of homeworkers are employed. After lengthy consideration the committee finally came to the conclusion that it was impracticable to fix universal piece-rates. It was agreed, however, that rates might be suggested for certain samples of boxes most usually made by homeworkers. The employers' and workers' representatives accordingly met and drew up a list of rates for thirty-four kinds of boxes made in London and forty-one kinds in Birmingham. In the majority of cases the rates suggested by the two sides were either identical or an agreement was arrived at after consultation; in the remaining cases, where an agreement was not reached, both rates were given in the list. These rates have not been definitely

fixed by the Trade Board but are to be used for the guidance of the Administration in ascertaining whether the piece-rates paid to outworkers are such as would enable the ordinary worker to earn a minimum time-rate of 3d. an hour.¹

The failure of the Trade Board to fix piece-rates, except in these special cases, brought it face to face with the same difficulty as the Tailoring Trade Board had to solve. Under Section 8(b) of the Trade Boards Act, in cases where persons are employed on piecework and a minimum time-rate but no general or special minimum piece-rate has been fixed, "an employer shall . . . be deemed to pay wages at less than the minimum rate . . . unless he shows that the piece-rate of wages paid would yield, in the circumstances of the case, to the ordinary worker, at least the same amount of money as the minimum time-rate." One of the objects of this provision was to secure the slower workers from dismissal. If piece-rates had to be such that all workers must earn not less than the minimum time-rate, there would, of course, have been a danger that the less efficient workers would have been thrown out of employment. But the provision creates at once difficulties of administration. If piece-rates are fixed, the inspector need only compare these rates with the rates which are paid to the workers, he need not inquire into the actual earnings per hour which the rates paid represent in any individual case. But if only a general time-rate has been fixed he must examine the wage sheets and ascertain the hourly earnings. If any workers fall below the minimum time-rate he must determine whether these are "ordinary" or "sub-ordinary" workers.

In order to facilitate administration it was necessary that the Board should determine what proportion of workers might be expected to be "sub-ordinary." In the tailoring trade, it will be remembered, it was laid down that an employer should be deemed to be paying less than the

¹ Appendix to Minutes of Trade Board, July 9 and 10, 1914.

minimum time-rate to the "ordinary" worker on piecework unless at least 80 per cent. of the workers earned not less than the minimum time-rate. In the box trade, the Trade Board has resolved that "in the case of pieceworkers (learners excluded), where 85 per cent. thereof are found to be earning at least the same amount of money as the minimum time-rate, the employer concerned shall not, in the case of the remaining workers, be deemed by the Trade Board to pay wages less than the minimum time-rate; but in the event of the percentage being found at any time to be less than 85 per cent. over an average of any four consecutive weeks, the matter shall be reported to the Trade Board, who shall consider as to proceedings being taken by the Board against the employer. The foregoing shall not prejudice the right of the Board to deal with the case of any individual worker or piece-rate in which the Board find that in view of the special circumstances of the case this rule should not apply. For the purpose of the rule set out above, workers shall as far as practicable be held to be divided into four classes, namely, workers engaged in : (1) making boxes or parts thereof by hand; (2) making paper-covered boxes or parts thereof by machinery; (3) making by machinery boxes or parts thereof which are not covered after making up; and (4) making cartons or folding boxes or parts thereof by machinery. The percentage shall be so distributed as not to allow an unreasonable proportion thereof to one or more of such classes, and in cases where division into such classes is impracticable, and in the case of homeworkers, no such distribution will be required by the Trade Board."¹ This rule is laid down merely for the guidance of employers and inspectors and is not legally binding. Nor is it to be rigidly applied. The proportion of "sub-ordinary" workers might vary according to the circumstances in any particular firm. If, for instance, an employer had dismissed all his

¹ Minutes of the Trade Board, January 31, 1912.

slow workers he would not then be entitled to pay less than the minimum time-rate to 15 per cent. of those left, for these would then presumably be workers of at least average capacity.

(iii) THE REGULATIONS AS TO LEARNERSHIP

We have discussed so far only the minimum rates for adult men and women. But the Trade Board has power to determine rates for learners also, under Section 4 (1) of the Trade Boards Act, which provides that rates may be fixed "so as to apply universally to the trade, or so as to apply . . . to any special class of workers." Owing to the varying conditions prevailing in different districts and in different firms, both with regard to the wages paid to learners and the length of the learnership period, the fixing of satisfactory minimum rates was a task of great difficulty. The question was one of great importance, for a considerable proportion of those employed fall under the category of learners. According to the Census of 1911, about 30 per cent. of the 4,068 males who were returned as engaged in cardboard boxmaking were under twenty-one, and 29·5 per cent. of the 26,501 females were under eighteen.¹ Any error in judgment in determining the rates to be paid to learners might have serious and far-reaching results on the organisation of the industry. If the rates were fixed too low, there would be a danger that adult workers would be displaced by juvenile labour. If they were fixed too high, they would check the expansion of the trade which was taking place.

It was decided at the first meeting of the Trade Board that minimum time-rates should be fixed for apprentices, but the task of fixing them was necessarily a slow one, the length of the learnership period and the different minima to be fixed giving occasion for much disagreement. In the first proposal to fix rates for female workers, issued on

¹ Census, 1911, Vol X, Part II, p. 6.

April 6, 1911, the learnership period was taken as three years, and the rates varied from 4s. 6d. a week during the first six months of employment to 11s. 6d. a week during the sixth six months, the week being taken as fifty-two hours. Both the rates and the period of learnership were severely criticised, and in the second "proposal to fix," issued on September 1, 1911, the rates were reduced to from 4s. to 10s. 6d. a week, the learnership period being, however, still three years. In response to further objections from employers the rates were again modified, and, as finally fixed to come into force on March 11, 1912, they were based both on the length of service and the age of the learner, the period of learnership varying from one to four years or more. In no case was a girl entitled to the full rate of 3d. per hour till she had attained the age of eighteen. The rates were as follows¹—

Rates for Female Learners.

	Learners commencing at			
	14 and under 15 years of age.	15 and under 17 years of age.	17 and under 20 years of age.	20 years of age and over.
During first 6 months of employment after the age of 14	per week. (52 hrs.)	per week.	per week.	per week.
" second 6 months	4/-	4/6	5/-	First 3 months, 6/-
" third "	4/6	5/6	6/6	Second, " 7/6
" fourth "	5/-	6/6	8/6	Third, " 9/-
" fifth "	6/-	7/6	10/6	Fourth, " 10/6
" sixth "	7/-	9/-	—	—
" seventh "	8/-	10/6	—	—
" eighth "	9/-	—	—	—
	10/6	—	—	—

¹ The rates payable to female learners in Ireland are exactly the same as in England.

The rates for male learners, which came into force on January 6, 1913, and were made obligatory in the following July were¹—

When employed under 15 years			4/6 a week (52 hrs.)		
"	"	at 15 and under 16 years	6/-	"	"
"	"	16	17	8/-	"
"	"	17	18	11/-	"
"	"	18	19	14/-	"
"	"	19	20	17/6	"
"	"	20	21	21/-	"

The Trade Board has not only laid down what rates are to be paid. The fixing of minimum rates gives it incidentally the opportunity to control also the conditions under which the learners are employed. Since, in order to determine to what wage female workers are entitled, it is necessary to know what length of time they have served in the trade, the Board has laid it down that on entering the trade every such learner must obtain a certificate. These certificates must be returned to the Board for re-issue whenever the learner leaves and goes to another firm. This system of certificates, introduced merely in order to facilitate administration, has the advantage that it enables the Board to satisfy itself as to the conditions of employment before granting any application. In order to ensure that the permission to pay lower rates to learners shall be used for the purpose for which it was intended, *i.e.* the necessary recruiting of the industry, and shall not act as an inducement to em-

¹ In Ireland the learnership period extends to the age of twenty-four, and the minimum rates are—

When employed under 15 years			4s. 6d. a week.		
"	"	at 15 and under 16 years	6s. a week.	"	"
"	"	16	17	8s.	"
"	"	17	18	10s.	"
"	"	18	19	12s.	"
"	"	19	20	14s.	"
"	"	20	21	17s.	"
"	"	21	22	19s.	"
"	"	22	23	22s.	"
"	"	23	24	24s.	"

ployers to engage juvenile labour merely because it is cheap, the Board has taken steps to secure that the learnership shall be genuine. A female learner is defined in the Board's determination as "a worker . . . employed by an employer who provides such learners with reasonable facilities for practically and efficiently learning the branch or branches of the trade . . . in which the learner is for the time being employed." As to what constitutes "reasonable facilities," this must, of course, depend very largely upon the nature of the particular business and regard must be paid to special circumstances. For general guidance, however, the Board has laid down that "the facilities provided should be such as to give the learner an opportunity of learning as many operations or processes (but not less than two) as will not unreasonably interfere with other workers or with the efficient carrying on of the business of the employer," and that the proportion of learners to other female workers should "not be excessive and should, as a general rule, be accepted as two learners to three such workers . . . subject to the variation of such proportion according as the special circumstances either of an employer or of his workers may require."¹ If reasonable facilities for learning are not provided, the employer is not entitled to pay learners' rates, and the Trade Board can refuse to grant certificates.²

In the case of male learners, since the minimum rates do not depend upon the length of previous employment, but

¹ Trade Board Minutes, January 31, 1912. At a meeting of the Trade Board, January 30 and 31, 1913, on the question of the proportion of learners to workers being discussed, there was mutual agreement that it would be wise to allow the trade to continue its practice in this respect for the present exactly as before, as it was fully realised that there was a shortage of good workers and that in consequence the trade badly needed recruits.

² When application for a certificate is made, the employer has to state the number of learners and workers employed. If the proportion of learners is greater than that recommended by the Board, a request for information as to the facilities for learning is usually made to the firm and the application is given special attention, a visit being paid if necessary. Up to June 27, 1914, 16,458 certificates had been issued.

merely upon age, it is not necessary to issue certificates, and the Board consequently does not possess such an effective means of control over the conditions of employment. The duty of the employer to provide facilities for learning is laid down in general terms, a learner being defined as "a worker under twenty-one years of age who, while employed, is engaged during the whole or a substantial part of his time in learning some branch or process of the trade."

III

THE EFFECT OF THE MINIMUM RATES ON WAGES AND CONDITIONS OF LABOUR

(i) THE EFFECT OF THE TRADE BOARD'S DETERMINATION ON WAGES

IN considering the effect of the Trade Board's determination on wages the same difficulties are met with as in the tailoring trade. No general minimum piece-rates have been fixed by the Trade Board; hence any comparison between old and new piece-lists is impracticable. A comparison of weekly earnings is extremely difficult, since it is impossible for the private inquirer to secure a sufficiently exhaustive return of wages, and such information as can be obtained is frequently lacking in precision. It is not possible, therefore, to give more than a general indication of the change brought about by the Trade Board.

(a) *The Wages of Women and Girls.*¹

The minimum time-rate for women, it will be remembered, was fixed by the Trade Board at 3d. an hour, with the proviso that an employer should be held *prima facie* to be complying with the Board's determination if 85 per cent. of his workers were earning 3d. an hour or more. Let us consider first in how many of the firms which we visited have the weekly earnings of women been increased since the fixing of the minimum rates. This increase may be brought about in two ways, either by a rise in piece-rates

¹ In this chapter we deal only with the wages of indoor workers. For the effect of the Trade Board's determination on the earnings of homeworkers, see Chapter VI.

(or by an increase in the weekly wage if workers are employed on day-work), or by improved methods of management without any change in the piece-rates. The following table will give some indication of the effects of the Trade Board rates—

TABLE II
Effect of Trade Board on Women's Wages.

District.	Number of Firms					Total.
	In which wages of timeworkers were raised.	In which piece-rates were raised.	In which weekly earnings were increased without rise in piece-rates (i.e. by better organisation).	In which weekly earnings were increased but information insufficient to determine by what means.	In which no change was made.	
London . . .	2	18	—	4	14	38
Norwich . . .	1	4	—	—	—	6
Birmingham and district and Bristol ¹ .	4	11	3	2	13	33
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	5	1	3	—	9	18
Nottingham . . .	1	—	—	—	5	6
Newcastle, Manchester, Liverpool, and Warrington . . .	3	1	—	1	2	7
	16	35	6	8	43	108

The conclusions to be drawn from these figures must be only tentative, owing to the small number of returns. It will be seen that earnings had been increased in 65 out of the 108 firms; as a rule it had been found necessary to raise piece-rates or the weekly wages of timeworkers, though in at least six cases weekly earnings had been increased without any change in the piece-rates, by means of better organisation. The table does not, of course, give any idea of the number of workers affected.

¹ Only two Bristol firms are included.

Nor does it show the extent of the increase; in some cases all that was necessary was a slight readjustment of piece-rates, in others they had to be raised very considerably.

Inadequate as these figures are, they show that, as was found to be the case in the tailoring industry, the Trade Board's determination has not brought about any *general* increase in wages. Different parts of the country have been affected in different degrees. In London and Birmingham some 50 per cent. of the firms from whom particulars were obtained have raised their piece-rates or time-rates to a greater or less degree; at Norwich at least five out of the six firms from whom we received information had found it necessary to raise their rates. In the Leicester district, on the other hand, the Trade Board's determination has had little effect so far as women are concerned.¹ And in Manchester, where the workers were described to us as "the aristocrats of the trade," the minimum was considered to be 4d. an hour before the minimum rates were fixed by the Trade Board, and the workers have therefore gained little, except in the worst paying firms. For whether wages have had to be raised or not depends, of course, not only on the district but on the class of employer. In districts where wages were relatively high the "low end" of the trade has been affected.

That the fixing of the minimum rate at 3d. must have caused a considerable increase in wages in some parts of the country (more especially the east, the south, parts of the Midlands and Scotland) is apparent from the objections urged by employers when the rate was proposed. "2½d. is more than it should be, as 2½d. is counted a very good wage

¹ We were unfortunately unable to make any personal inquiry as to the effect of the Trade Board's determination in the Yorkshire district. Judging, however, from the very small number of objections to the proposed rates received from the employers in this district it would appear that the wages were relatively little affected. An objection was received from twenty-eight workers protesting against any rate less than 3½d. per hour, "as anything below that would reduce our earnings and would tend to make life scarcely worth living."

here." "A 3d. rate is simply ridiculous." "Our wages, which are a little below the 2½d. standard suggested, are considered good in this district." "The proposals would throw out of employment hands to whom we are now paying an average of 10s. weekly." "My workers have not hitherto considered that they are underpaid, and an increase up to 2½d. per hour as a minimum would have made them well pleased." "The present minimum wage paid to female timeworkers in the boxmaking in this town is 11s. 3d. for fifty-four hours." "We find that on an average 50 per cent. of our workers cannot earn 2½d.; the other 50 per cent. have no difficulty in doing so, but if 3d. and 3½d. are enforced we feel sure that very few would be able to earn it; so far as our pieceworkers are concerned, they would be satisfied with a rate of 2½d." "2½d. is too high and the other two rates simply mean disaster; the majority of workers are unable to earn even the 2½d. rate." "2½d. is distinctly above the average wage earned in Norwich and Ipswich, by girls of a similar class to those working in the boxmaking industry."¹ An employer in a Midland town stated that, in one department, out of sixteen piece-workers, all but four earned less than 3d. an hour; their average wage was 11s. 7d. for a 55½-hour week, no less than nine earning below this sum.

The conclusion suggested by these objections is borne out by the information given us by employers. In one firm the wages of inworkers have been raised 2s. 3d. since the Act; in another they have been raised by 2s. or 3s.; in a third the wages of the women ranged from 9s. to 15s. and now range from 13s. to 15s. In a fourth women's wages have increased all round; whereas they used to earn from 10s. to 15s. a week, they now earn from 13s. to 17s. In a fifth the average wage for girls over twenty-one years was 11s., no timeworkers getting more than 2½d. an hour;

¹ In this district even the workers protested against the 3½d. rate proposed and declared that they would be satisfied with 2½d. an hour, being afraid that a higher minimum would mean the discharge of slow workers.

they now earn at the rate of 3d. or 3½d. an hour. In a firm in the north-west of England, out of 183 women and girls (including learners), eighty-nine had to have their wages increased when the minimum rates were fixed, by amounts varying from 6d. to 5s. 5d. a week;¹ the wage bill was increased by about 10 per cent. The weekly wage bills of two other firms have been increased by 20 per cent. and 30 per cent. respectively. In many cases employers have been obliged to refund arrears of wages to their workers. The arrears ordered to be repaid in the nine months from October 1, 1913 to June 30, 1914, amounted to £477.

The details given above, meagre as they are, point to the conclusion that the Trade Board's determination has been of great benefit to the more poorly paid section of the women workers in the boxmaking industry. They may be supplemented by a study of the Board of Trade's Report on Earnings and Hours of Labour in 1906. This Report included a return of the wages of 2,934 women employed in the manufacture of boxes made of cardboard, etc. In order to measure the increase brought about by the Trade Board it is necessary to inquire whether the wages of women boxmakers had risen between September 1906, the date of the Board of Trade's inquiry, and March 1912, when the rates fixed by the Trade Board came into force. Unfortunately, data are wanting for the solution of this question. The *Board of Trade Labour Gazette*, which gives monthly the rise in wages secured by the trade unions in certain industries, does not return separately the figures for the cardboard box industry, and in any case such increases, being secured by trade unions, would affect mainly, if not solely, men. By the courtesy of the Women's Industrial Council we have been allowed to see the evidence obtained by them in 1907, as to the

¹ Thirteen received increases of on an average less than 1s. a week, twenty-nine increases of from 1s. to 2s., twenty-three of from 2s. to 3s., fifteen of from 3s. to 4s., six of from 4s. to 5s., and three of 5s. or more.

wages paid by certain London employers at that date. We have visited some of these same employers and have learned what wages they were paying immediately before the Trade Board's determination. Though the number of such cases is too small to speak with any certainty, our impression is that wages in London, at any rate, had remained at very much the same level during this period. We shall probably not be far wrong in taking the figures for 1906 as a basis for comparison. The wages at this date of the 2,934 women of and above eighteen years about whom particulars were obtained were as follows¹—

TABLE III
Wages of Women employed in Boxmaking in 1906.

Wages.	Number.	Grouped Number.	Percentage.
5s. and under 6s.	10		
6s.	62		
7s.	122	725	24.7
8s.	203		
9s.	328		
10s.	416		
11s.	388		
12s.	343	1618	55.1
13s.	261		
14s.	210		
15s.	182		
16s.	76		
17s.	86	472	16.1
18s.	82		
19s.	46		
20s.	56		
21s.	11		
22s.	24	103	3.5
23s.	8		
24s.	4		
25s.	3		
26s.	3		
27s.	4	11	0.4
28s.	—		
29s.	1		
30s. and above	5	5	0.2
	2,934	2,934	100.0

¹ Report on Earnings and Hours of Labour in 1906, Vol. VIII (Cd. 6556 of 1913), p. 68.

The average number of hours worked per week was 53·4. Taking this average, the weekly wage, at a rate of 3d. an hour, would amount to 13s. 4d. It will be seen that about 1,960 women, or no fewer than 66·8 per cent., were earning less than this wage. And these figures include only women working on the employers' premises. The proportion of outworkers earning less than this rate would certainly be greater. A certain number of piece-workers, say 15 per cent., still earn less than 3d. an hour. Therefore, on the assumption that the wages were substantially the same in March 1912 as in September 1906,¹ some 52 per cent. of the indoor workers must have had their wages raised as a result of the Trade Board's determination. And this does not show the whole extent of the change, for where piece-rates have been raised in order to bring the slower workers up to the minimum, the quick workers who previously could earn more than the minimum have also found their wages increased in proportion.

Wages of Female Learners.—So far we have only spoken of the wages of adult women. Turning to the learners, we find that the Trade Board's determination has meant an increase of wages fairly generally over the whole country. Many objections were received from employers when the "proposal to fix" was issued. In some cases, where the learners were started at 4s. or 4s. 6d., the increases were considerably less than those proposed. Frequently, however, the starting wage was much less than 4s. "The usual wage to commence for a girl of fourteen is nearer a couple of shillings than 4s. 6d., with rises according to merit." "The learners' rates are utterly absurd. The custom of the trade has been to pay 2s. 6d. per week

¹ There are two factors which might have influenced the course of wages in some slight degree. There is a shortage of labour, due partly to the fact that, the boxmaking trade having acquired a bad reputation, mothers are not anxious to put their daughters to it; at the same time the industry has been expanding, so that wages might have shown a tendency to rise somewhat without the intervention of the Trade Board.

to commence with and an increase according to ability as in any other trade." "We have no difficulty in obtaining any amount of learners on the present basis, 3s. per week to commence." And several employers have told us the same. In some firms, even, it was the custom to pay the learners nothing for the first few months, though the worker under whom the learner was placed might give her a shilling or two.

We may mention in passing that many employers consider it a hardship that they should have to pay so high a starting wage unless they are given some hold over the girls. During the first few months the learners waste much material, apart from the trouble involved in teaching them. At present there is nothing to prevent their leaving after a short time—either to go to another boxmaking firm or to another trade—and their wages are then a dead loss to the firm which has employed them. As is probably the case in many other industries, a considerable proportion of the girls who enter the trade do not remain in it permanently. On this point light is thrown by an inquiry made by the Trade Board in the spring of 1914. Out of 15,410 persons to whom certificates had been issued and who were at the time within the limits of age and experience prescribed by the Trade Board for learners, 3,792 were known to have left an employment in the boxmaking trade but no information was in the possession of the office as to their subsequent employment. On circulars being sent to them, it was found that though a small number were still in the trade, the majority, between 16 and 21 per cent. of all those to whom certificates had been issued,¹ had left it.

¹ Of the 3,792 persons to whom circulars were sent, replies were received from 2,487. Of these, 373 had re-entered the box trade, 1,622 had entered another trade, and 492 were not employed. The proportion among those who failed to send returns would probably have been very similar. Of course, some of those who were at the time without employment, and perhaps some of those who had entered another trade, may have later returned to the box trade.

Though the establishment of minimum rates has very frequently necessitated an increase in the learners' wages, in a few cases a reverse movement has taken place. It is a common practice for the learners to be put on piece-work after a year or two, or perhaps sooner, and, if they are quick workers, they may earn above the minimum fixed by the Trade Board. Some firms now keep their learners longer on timework, paying them the Trade Board rates. In all, out of sixty-seven firms from whom we obtained information, forty had raised the wages of their learners, twenty-one had made no change, while in six the earnings had been reduced.

(b) *The Wages of Men and Boys.*

To turn now to the effect of the Trade Board on the wages of men. Here the difficulty of collecting adequate statistics is even greater than in the case of the women. In the first place, the number of men employed in box-making is comparatively small.¹ As we have seen, the men and boys are roughly in the proportion to the women and girls of two to thirteen. Several of the firms which we visited either employed no men or only one or two. In the second place, as the minimum rate for men was not fixed till January 6, 1913, and did not become obligatory until the following July, the time is too short to determine the full effects of the Trade Board. We summarise in Table IV the information received from sixty-eight firms, all of which employed men.

Probably these figures somewhat understate the case. The Birmingham firms, for instance, and many of those in London were visited at a time when the minimum rates, though fixed, had not yet become obligatory, and in two instances at least in London men were being employed at a rate of less than 6d. an hour. Moreover, in a few

¹ See *ante*, pp. 1, 3.

cases where the employers stated that the fixing of the minimum rates had had no effect on the wages of the men whom they employed, there is some reason for believing that the wages of young men of about twenty-one years had been raised. It will be seen that, as in the case of the women, the men's wages have been affected in different degrees in different parts of the country. In Newcastle an employer remarked that it was utterly absurd to fix

TABLE IV

Effect of Trade Board on Men's Wages.

	Number of Firms		
	Which raised Wages.	Which made no change.	Total.
London	4	18	22
Norwich	4	1	5
Birmingham and dis- trict	0	14	14
Bristol	2	0	2
Leicestershire and North- amptonshire	8	4	12
Nottingham	6	0	6
Newcastle, Manchester, Liverpool and Warrin- ton	2	5	7
	26	42	68

so low a minimum as 6d. an hour, men could easily earn from 30s. to 40s. a week; when the "proposal to fix" was posted up in his factory the men and boys had come out grumbling that they would leave if those were the wages which they were to be paid. In Leicester and Nottingham, on the other hand, where the Trade Board's determination made comparatively little difference to the women, the men's wages have in many cases had to be raised. And the rise in wages has often been very considerable. To

the skilled workers, such as the guillotine and shear cutters, the fixing of the minimum rate has, generally speaking, made little difference. But in the boxmaking industry a very large proportion of the male workers are unskilled. That the fixing of the minimum rate at 6d. an hour meant no little increase in their wages is seen from the objections received from employers (though the number of objections raised to the proposed minimum rates for male workers was far less than those urged against the rates for female workers, largely because the number of males employed was so much smaller). "We employ a considerable number of unskilled men and boys at 4½d. to 5½d. per hour," wrote an employer in the Midlands; "we propose 5d. an hour as the minimum." "The male workers in our employ affected by the proposal to fix," wrote another employer, "are receiving an average weekly wage of 22s. to 23s. for fifty-four hours." "The present rate of wages paid to labourers in this district in the building and other trades," objected a third, "does not exceed 4½d. per hour. Why should we box-makers be made to pay our labourers 26s. per week, when all other employers in the district pay 19s. 6d. or less?" In a large Liverpool firm we were told that the men were only receiving 5d. per hour before the rates were fixed. In a Bristol firm one man was earning only 4½d. per hour, another 4d., and a third only averaged 3½d.; none received more than 20s. to 25s. for a week of fifty hours. In another firm in the same town 25s. was the maximum for a 56½-hour week, reached at the age of about twenty-six years; in this firm the hours were reduced to fifty and nearly a dozen young men received an increase, several as much as 5s. or 6s. and one 9s. In a town in the east of England a cutter was paid only 22s. (for fifty-two hours), while two men who helped him on the machine received only 17s. and 18s. respectively. In a Leicestershire town a scorer of about twenty-three years was receiving only 16s. or 17s. and had to be raised to 27s.; in this district we were told of several instances where the

wages of unskilled male workers, before the minimum rates were fixed, were only 15s. or 16s.¹

To corroborate this conclusion, that the fixing of the minimum rate has caused a marked advance in the wages of men, at any rate in certain districts, we may refer to the Report on Earnings and Hours of Labour in 1906. In comparing the wages at this date with the wages in January 1913, when the rates for male workers were fixed, some allowance must be made for a possible rise effected by trade union action. In September 1906 the wages of the 726 men over twenty years of age about whom particulars were obtained were as given in Table V.²

The average number of hours in a full week was 53·4. Taking this average, the weekly wage, at 6d. an hour, would be 26s. 8½d. It will be seen that about 339, or 46·7 per cent., earned less than this amount. The figures, however, include youths from twenty to twenty-one years, who would not be entitled to the rate of 6d. an hour. They also include warehousemen and packers, general labourers, and "other men," some of whom would not come within the scope of the Trade Board. The percentage earning less than 6d. an hour is therefore somewhat higher than it would be if we were considering only the wages of those affected by the Trade Board's determination. Of the cutters 25 per cent. were earning 24s. a week or less, while another 25 per cent. earned from 24s. to 28s.; of the warehousemen and packers 75 per cent. were earning not more than 24s.³

¹ It does not follow, of course, that the wages of these men must always have been raised. In some cases employers have escaped the obligation to pay the minimum wage by a reorganisation of the work. Those who previously only spent part of their time in work directly connected with boxmaking are now confined to "ancillary" occupations, such as portage, the moving of cardboard in bulk or the lighting of fires, which are regarded by the Trade Board as falling outside the scope of its determination, the duties which would bring them within its scope being transferred to other workers who are already entitled to receive the minimum wage.

² Report on Earnings and Hours of Labour in 1906, Vol. VIII (Cd. 6556 of 1913), p. 67.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

As far as boys of under eighteen years are concerned, the fixing of minimum rates seems to have made no difference. In fact, some of the employers who sent objections to the proposal to fix rates for male workers even suggested for these ages higher rates than those proposed. But in many cases the wages of youths of eighteen to twenty have been raised considerably.

TABLE V

Wages of Men employed in Boxmaking in 1906.

Wages.	No.	Grouped No.	Percentage.
14s. to 15s.	8	8	1.1
15s. , 16s.	15		
16s. , 17s.	20		
17s. , 18s.	13	96	13.2
18s. , 19s.	32		
19s. , 20s.	16		
20s. , 21s.	42		
21s. , 22s.	27		
22s. , 23s.	48	183	25.2
23s. , 24s.	30		
24s. , 25s.	36		
25s. , 26s.	38		
26s. , 27s.	20		
27s. , 28s.	29	129	17.8
28s. , 29s.	30		
29s. , 30s.	12		
30s. , 31s.	51		
31s. , 32s.	12		
32s. , 33s.	44	135	18.6
33s. , 34s.	10		
34s. , 35s.	18		
35s. , 36s.	31		
36s. , 37s.	14		
37s. , 38s.	15	73	10.1
38s. , 39s.	10		
39s. , 40s.	3		
40s. , 45s.	43	43	5.9
45s. , 50s.	30	30	4.1
50s. , 55s.	16	16	2.2
55s. , 60s.	3	3	0.4
60s. , 65s.	4	4	0.6
65s. and above	6	6	0.8
	726	726	100.0

(ii) THE INDIRECT EFFECT ON WAGES AND TRADE UNIONISM

An important question is whether the increase in wages secured by the more poorly paid section of the workers has been counteracted by any reduction in the earnings of the more highly paid. In a few cases timework has been substituted for piecework, with the result that the more expert workers have suffered. And in some cases where piece-rates have had to be readjusted, while the rates for the commoner class of work have been raised, the rates for better-class work have fallen. In at least one case that has come to our notice the higher wages seem to have been deliberately cut down; the rise in the rates paid to outworkers which was necessitated by the Trade Board's determination was balanced by a lowering of the wages paid to the best workers inside the factory; if any worker had been earning more than the minimum, the employer was of opinion that she had been overpaid and every one was brought down to the same level. In another firm, when the minimum rates were proposed, a notice was posted up to the effect that any advance in such of the rates as were below the Trade Board's minimum would be followed by a reduction in the rates which were above it. With regard to the men, one or two employers expressed it as their opinion that, though wages had not actually been reduced, yet there would be a tendency to postpone rises which would otherwise have been given; owing to the sudden increase at twenty-one years—from 21s. to 26s. for a fifty-two hour week—young men would have to remain longer at that wage without a rise; an employer would think twice before raising a good workman's wage. Whether this will actually be the case or not it is impossible yet to say, since the minimum rates have only been in operation for so short a period.

But the great majority of employers whom we ques-

tioned declared that there was no tendency for the minimum to become the maximum. Indeed, in several cases the better paid workers have had their wages raised instead of lowered. "Every one is getting more now," said one employer, "even those who previously earned the minimum rate." The raising of the wages of the worst paid to the minimum created discontent among the better paid unless their wages also were raised. And where the piece-rates have had to be increased the quick workers naturally benefit as well as the slower ones.

In the tailoring industry advances considerably in excess of the minimum have been secured by Trade Union action. Unfortunately, in the box trade the establishment of minimum rates does not seem to have encouraged organisation among the workers. The guillotine cutters are organised in the National Society of Printers' Warehousemen and Cutters and have secured advances in several centres of the industry; but, generally speaking, attempts to organise the women workers and the more poorly paid sections of the male workers have not met with success. When the Trade Board was first established there seems to have been considerable enthusiasm among the women, and numbers joined a Trade Union, either the Printers' Warehousemen and Cutters Society (which admits women as well as men to membership) or the National Federation of Women Workers. This enthusiasm was, however, short-lived and the members soon fell off.

(iii) THE EFFECT ON THE CONDITIONS OF LABOUR

Apart from the increase in wages brought about by the Trade Board's determination, the conditions of employment have been indirectly affected. In a few cases the hours have been shortened. In a London firm, for instance, the hours were reduced from 55 to 52, and in a firm in the west of England, in which the hours of male workers had previously been 56½, they were cut down to

50, in order to lessen the increase in the wages bill which would otherwise have been necessary. More commonly the nominal working hours have been unchanged, but the work has been reorganised so that there is less waste of time.

It will be remembered that in the tailoring industry, since the Trade Board laid down that the workers must be paid not less than the minimum time-rate for the whole period during which they are in the factory, whether actually working or not, firms have been led to devise means to obviate loss of time, and the same result is to be observed in the boxmaking trade. There is still a good deal of wasted time when orders come in irregularly, as, for instance, at Nottingham, but elsewhere lost time is avoided either by better organisation or by making to stock when orders are slack. "In the majority of factories," said a worker in a west of England town, "the work has been reorganised; there used to be no limit to waiting, now there is no waste of time at all; instead of the girls waiting for work they make to stock." "The boxmaking department of a firm here," said another worker in the same town, "cannot keep girls employed all their time. Formerly the girls used sometimes to go for a whole day and earn only a few pence. Now they stay at home two or three days in the week and work full time the other days." "Before the Act," said a worker in another town, "if we were short of work we idled about. Now, if there is not enough to do we can go home." It would seem, indeed, to be a fairly common practice now for the girls to be sent home if there is no work for them to do. This may be a doubtful benefit in wet weather for the girls who live some distance from the factory, but on the whole it is greatly appreciated. In a town where the Trade Board's determination had had little effect upon wages, the possibility of going home instead of having to wait about in the factory without work was looked upon as the greatest benefit the Act had conferred.

Lost time may be due not only to defective organisation on the part of the employer, but to unpunctuality on the part of the worker. A striking instance of this is afforded by a firm in a small provincial town where the custom formerly was for the girls to work in teams, the machinist, who was paid by piece, paying what she thought fit to the girls who assisted her. So long as this system continued the firm did not trouble themselves if the machinists were late and the other girls consequently had to wait for work. When, however, the firm had to pay these girls the minimum rate, which meant a considerable advance in wages, they took more care to keep them fully employed and insisted on greater punctuality. This stricter supervision seems to have been a frequent result of the establishment of a minimum wage (though in some cases, particularly in districts where, owing to the great demand for female labour, it is more difficult to enforce strict discipline, the girls are still allowed to come in when they like). "Formerly," said a worker, "we used to go in and out as we pleased; now the firm is more particular." "There is better discipline now," said an employer, "we don't leave the hands to themselves. The forewoman is everywhere. Formerly the girls came in at all hours, *e.g.* 2 p.m. on Mondays. Now they are forced to be regular in their attendance." "We have put a time recorder in," said another employer; "this showed up a distinct and unexpected average loss of over one hour per day per worker." "When the girls came at eight o'clock," said the employer who had reduced his hours from 55 to 52 per week, "they gossiped a great deal and did not really start work till 8.30. Now they come at 8.30 and begin at once; they do quite as much work in 52 hours as they previously did in 55." "Before the Act," said a worker, "the master did not trouble what a piece-worker earned. Now he goes round and notes any who do not earn the minimum and asks the reason; if they have been ill, he says nothing, but if they

have been slack, they are told that they must work harder."

In some cases this speeding up has been carried to a wholly unjustifiable extent. One worker told us that at her factory, where the wages paid had previously been very low, the workers had been made to earn the minimum, without any alteration in piece-rates, by an intolerable system of driving. "I would far rather go back to the 8s. a week," she said, "than get 13s. and have to work so hard." "It is slavery getting the minimum," said a worker in another factory, "the piece-rates are fixed by the quickest workers." This girl's mother was of the opinion that the Trade Board had not been of any benefit to the girls. Indeed, it seemed almost a new idea to her that it was intended to be. Such an infraction of the spirit, if not of the letter, of the Trade Boards Act is, in the absence of any established minimum piece-rates, very difficult to detect. With a longer experience of the working of the Act, however, the inspectors will be better able to judge whether any given piece-rate is or is not high enough to yield the minimum time-rate to the ordinary worker without undue speeding up.

(iv) CONCLUSIONS

We may now sum up the effect of the Trade Board's determinations on wages and conditions of employment—

1. As far as women workers are concerned it would appear, from a comparison with the wages earned in 1906, that some 52 per cent. or even more have had their wages raised. This rise has not taken place equally all over the country. In certain districts, such as Leicester and Nottingham, the wages of women have been little affected; in other districts, *e. g.* the east, the south and some parts of the Midlands, wages have been raised considerably.

2. The minimum rates fixed for learners have led to a fairly general increase over the whole country in the wages paid to girls. Young boys under eighteen have been little

affected, but the wages of youths of from eighteen to twenty have often had to be raised.

3. The number of men employed in the boxmaking industry is comparatively small. So far as our information extends, it would seem that the Trade Board's determination has made little difference to the skilled workers. But a large proportion of the men are employed in unskilled work and these were, before the fixing of the minimum rate, in many instances being paid at rates far below 6d. an hour.

4. In a few cases where piece-rates have been readjusted some have been cut down and occasionally timework has been substituted for piecework. But there is no general tendency for the minimum to become the maximum. On the contrary, the more highly paid workers have demanded an increase to correspond with the rise granted to the worse paid, and when piece-rates are raised the quicker workers naturally gain as well as the slower.

5. The establishment of the Trade Board gave at first a great impetus to the voluntary organisation of the workers and numbers of women joined a Trade Union. This increased membership has, however, not been maintained.

6. In addition to the direct increase in wages the Trade Board has indirectly benefited the workers in another direction. In a few cases hours have been reduced, while a frequent result has been the reorganisation of the work so as to avoid waste of time. On the other hand, closer application and greater punctuality are insisted upon. While in the majority of cases this stricter supervision is not carried beyond reasonable limits, some employers have yielded to the temptation to resort to short-sighted and inhuman methods of speeding up their workers instead of raising the piece-rates. It is essential that investigating officers should watch carefully for evidence of workers being forced to earn the minimum time-rate by excessive pressure, and that the authorities should take proceedings against employers who adopt such practices.

IV

THE ECONOMIC REACTIONS OF THE MINIMUM RATES

ONE of the arguments advanced against the establishment of the minimum wage was that the increased cost of production consequent on a larger wage bill would naturally lead to a rise in prices, which would inevitably restrict the demand. A peculiarity of the industry is that there is very little retail demand for empty boxes. They are used as the raw material, so to speak, for many other widely different industries, the manufacture of boots, gloves, hosiery, blouses, millinery, lace, confectionery, starch, soap, scent, pills, etc. To the manufacturer of these articles the cost of boxes is an element in his cost of production for which he gets little in return, and he is naturally anxious to cut down the price as low as possible. A rise in the price of boxes, it was argued, might lead him to discard the use of them altogether and wrap up his goods in paper, in which case the workers, instead of experiencing an increase in wages, would suffer loss of employment.

The first point to be considered is the effect on prices of the Trade Board's determination. During the last two or three years there has been a fairly general rise in the price of boxes, but this rise is due to a variety of causes. The Trade Board is one factor at work, but the Insurance Act and especially the rise in the cost of raw materials have been far more instrumental in bringing it about. During the last two or three years the price of all raw material, strawboard, glue and, more recently, paper, has increased considerably. The relative value of the labour

and material varies according to the kind of box. In a small box, according to the calculations of a large employer of labour, the value of the labour may be six times as great as the value of the material, while in a large box the labour value may be only one-ninth that of the material; it would therefore be the manufacture of the small hand-made boxes that would be most affected by the increased wage bill.

Indirectly, indeed, the Trade Boards Act has perhaps raised prices. Before the Act was passed, though attempts had been made to organise the employers, they had in the main been unsuccessful. But the formation of the Trade Board led the employers to unite in order to safeguard their interests. The British Paper Box Manufacturers' Federation was formed in April 1910, and now consists of nine District Associations. A Federation has also been formed for Scotland. The organisation, having been formed, was naturally used to secure better prices. The rise was ascribed by the employers to the minimum wage, but was in reality due far more to the rise in the price of raw material, as is clearly seen in the case of, for instance, Northampton, where prices were raised 10 per cent., though the Trade Board's determination had caused very little difference in the amount of wages paid. The rise in prices was, indeed, overdue. It is, of course, not universal. Several employers have told us that, though their cost of production has increased, they have not been able to ask higher prices for fear of losing their customers. But it is very general.

How far has the rise in prices led to a reduced demand? We were told that certain classes of cheap boxes, for example some used in the confectionery trade, had gone out completely, and that paper had been substituted for them. But this has happened to a very limited extent, and the general tendency is to pack goods more carefully and to use boxes more and more. The "selling value" of a good wrapping is, indeed, well recognised, and it is

probably often more practicable to reduce the value or quantity of the article enclosed than to resort to a less attractive covering.

When the minimum rates were proposed, fear was expressed that the small employer would be "squeezed out." In the boxmaking industry a large proportion of the employers are men with a small capital;¹ they are, of course, at a disadvantage in not being able to buy their material in large quantities or economise in production by the extensive use of machinery. On the other hand, there are compensating advantages. Since he does not need large premises, the small man can be on the spot where his services are required and is thus able to save carriage. He can superintend all the work himself, and can, as a rule, execute small orders much more quickly than the large manufacturer. If he confines himself to one or two special lines, no great amount of machinery is necessary. It would appear that in certain instances the Trade Boards Act is undoubtedly pressing hardly on the small employer, and we have heard indirectly of a few cases where a firm has given up business altogether. On the other hand, it must be remembered that small firms would in any case be springing up and disappearing independently of Trade Board legislation. A considerable number of small employers are men who have been foremen and think that they see a chance—which is not always realised—of succeeding "on their own." So far, at any rate, the effect of the establishment of minimum rates would not seem to be serious. This may, of course, be partly because some of the small employers are, as there is reason to believe, evading the Act, owing to the inadequacy of inspection. Moreover, it has to be remembered that during the last

¹ Out of 281 employers in London, 55 were, in September 1913, employing less than 10 boxmakers (including outworkers), and 70 between 10 and 20; 23 of these firms (or possibly a few more) were, however, non-competitive firms, whose boxmaking department was subsidiary to the production of other goods.

few years the boxmaking industry generally has been in a very flourishing condition. During a depression many of the less well-managed businesses would probably succumb.

The boxmaking trade is, on the whole, comparatively little affected by foreign competition. In the case of the larger boxes importation is impossible, since the cost of the freightage is very heavy in proportion to the value of the goods. Moreover, boxes being bulky articles, a customer cannot keep large stocks; he wants quick delivery and cannot wait for boxes to be imported from abroad. But in the case of folding boxes, small rigid boxes (such as jewellery boxes, pill boxes and scent boxes) and matchboxes, there is keen competition with foreign countries.¹ And, apart from boxes imported empty, manufactures imported ready boxed compete with English-made manufactures, and any increase in the price of the box may affect the sale of the articles. The establishment of minimum rates would seem undoubtedly to have led to an increased importation of matchboxes. A firm in the north-west of England which previously made the boxes for the matches it manufactured closed its box-making department when the minimum rates were fixed and imported its boxes instead. And we were told by a London firm that they had lost an order for 3000 gross a week and that this order had been placed abroad. Where the boxes are made by homeworkers, as is often the case in London, it is impossible to introduce economies in production to counterbalance the increased cost of labour. With regard to cardboard boxes, a few firms making small boxes seem to have lost some of their trade to the foreigner, but the imports have increased very slowly. It must be remembered, of course, that foreign competition existed long before the Trade Boards Act and is only to be partially

¹ Cardboard boxes are imported from Germany, France, United States, etc.; chip boxes mainly from Sweden and to a lesser extent from Germany.

(if at all) ascribed to it. The imports of cardboard and chip boxes for the three years 1911-13 were as follows¹—

	Imports, less Re-exports, of Boxes and Cartons of Paper or Cardboard.		Imports ² of Chip Boxes.	
	cwts.	£	cwts.	£
1911	7,888	25,488	30,110	27,410
1912	8,046	24,818	45,156	40,667
1913	8,253	25,078	50,389	44,097

During the same years the exports of cardboard and paper boxes² manufactured in the United Kingdom were 34,530 cwt., 45,962 cwt. and 47,732 cwt. respectively (in value £63,419, £83,609 and £83,345).³ The exports have therefore increased at a much greater rate than the imports.

An increased wage bill does not necessarily mean an increase in the cost of production. As was shown in the case of the tailoring industry, it may lead to economies and better methods of organisation on the part of the employer and to increased efficiency on the part of the worker. As to the latter point employers often argue that girls do not want to earn more than a certain amount. If they have a few shillings for themselves after they have paid their parents for their board and lodging (a customary payment which seems to bear little relation to the actual cost of living), they are perfectly content. In some cases this appears to be true; continued underpayment has led the girls to acquiesce in a low standard. "The girls here," said a worker in a provincial town, "are perfectly content with 13s. They practically all live at home and pay their mothers 7s. or 8s. I do not trouble to earn more than the minimum myself." On the other hand, employers

¹ Annual Statement of Foreign Trade for 1913, pp. 177, 208, 599. Boxes were not separately enumerated before 1911.

² The re-exports of foreign-made, and the exports of British made, chip boxes were negligible.

³ *Ibid.* p. 445.

have told us that the prospect of a higher wage does lead the girls to put forth greater energy. "The output per machine has increased," said one employer, "because the girls work better; there is more inducement now, owing to the increased wage." "The cost has not increased as much as we expected," said another, "those who are paid a larger wage earn it, and the output is greater." "If the workers are paid more they respond and put forth more effort." "Low wages mean ill-nourished bodies, ill-nourished minds and an ill-nourished way of looking at things, and that reacts on the work. Higher wages certainly mean higher mental capacity, more care and intelligence." "Well-paid workers value their job; the badly paid worker does not care."

On the part of the employer the necessity of paying an increased wage bill has led to a closer scrutiny of the organisation of his business in order to effect economies. "There have been savings in the methods of manufacture," said one employer, "which have succeeded in many cases in reducing costs. The Act has opened the eyes of employers to the fact that, in many cases, they were wasting money." "The trade," said another employer, "is in a sounder position now than before. Firms have to go into costs. They do not like it, but it is good for them."

These economies may be effected in several ways. There are first the methods to which we have already alluded—the stricter supervision of the workers and the re-organisation of the work so as to avoid waste of time.¹ Another direction in which improved methods can be introduced is in the matter of learners. Some employers have told us that they now exercise greater care in training their young hands. "The learners are supervised more." "We have to be much more careful how we train." "Every worker has to be trained to earn the minimum, whereas formerly it did not matter how little they earned." In a west of England firm, which used to employ a large number of

¹ See *ante*, pp. 42-43.

boys, who did not always have any very definite work and wasted a considerable part of their time, fewer are now engaged (partly, at any rate, because of the Trade Board's determination¹), and these are taken on in the hope of keeping them permanently. They are given a more general training, being moved from one machine to another. Other employers, unfortunately, adopt the more short-sighted policy of giving the learners only the minimum training required by the Trade Board's regulations and keeping them to one process, so that they may the more quickly become proficient at that.

A third method by which the cost of production may be reduced is by the introduction of machinery. During the last few years there has been a very greatly increased demand for machinery and, in the opinion of manufacturers of machines from whom we sought information, this is to be attributed partly to the minimum rates. "In our experience," writes one machine maker, "the demand for labour-saving machinery in the box trade has been steadily increasing for the last ten years. A further marked advance has occurred in the last couple of years, and we are of opinion that this is not unconnected with the new Trade Board regulations." "We know for a fact," writes another, "that many machinery houses have received increased orders owing to the introduction of this new Act." "I have certainly found," declares a third, "that the fixing of the minimum rates has led to an increase in the use of machinery in the manufacture of paper and cardboard boxes, and, as far as I can gauge, it has increased the sale by at least 25 per cent." On the other hand, the establishment of a legal minimum wage has not been the only factor at work. "The box manufacturer," writes another machine maker, "is now waking up to the fact that he must do something to keep his head above water, owing to several causes, *i. e.* Trade Board rates, National Health Insurance, the great advance in the

¹ See *post*, p. 58.

cost of materials and working expenses always rising. I am now getting many more orders from the smaller man." Another manufacturer even asserts that, in his opinion, "the Trade Board rates have not had the slightest influence at all; the percentage of the yearly increase in the use of machinery set in long before the Trade Board rates were established and it has not increased since." This latter would, indeed, appear to be the more probable state of the case. Out of ninety-two employers whom we questioned on this point seventy-one replied either that they had introduced no machinery at all since the Act, or that they had introduced it to meet expanding trade or for other reasons unconnected with the Trade Board's determination. As one employer remarked, "if you want to get on, you must get up-to-date machinery." Of the remaining twenty-one who stated that they had introduced machinery as a consequence of the minimum wage, several admitted that they would have been obliged to introduce it in any case, but stated that their action had been somewhat accelerated by the influence of the Trade Board.

We may now summarise the principal conclusions of this chapter. There has, in the last two or three years, been a rise in the price of boxes. But this has been due almost entirely to causes unconnected with the Trade Board, in particular the Insurance Act and the increased cost of raw materials. Certain branches of the trade, particularly the manufacture of some kinds of matchboxes, appear to have suffered from increased foreign competition owing to the advance in the rates paid to the workers. On the other hand, the advance in wages has led in many cases to an increased output on the part of the workers, and to closer attention on the part of the employers to questions of training, organisation and machinery. These changes together have tended to keep down the cost of production.

V

THE EFFECT OF THE MINIMUM RATES ON
EMPLOYMENT

WE have already touched, in the previous chapter, on the possibility that the establishment of a minimum wage might result in loss of employment to the workers, either by the failure of firms to carry on their business or by a curtailment in demand consequent on increased prices. We have seen that the workers have only been affected to a very slight degree by either of these contingencies. There remains, however, a third possibility. The volume of production may remain unchanged, but the slower and less efficient workers may be discharged; their places may be taken by more expert workers, or the introduction of machinery and improved methods of organisation may enable the same amount of work to be turned out by a smaller staff.

Turning to the facts, we find very much the same results as were noted in the tailoring trade. There is a tendency to dispense with the services of learners, to dismiss some of the less efficient adults and to reduce the number of homeworkers,¹ the work being done inside the factory instead of at home.

Learners.—It has been shown that the establishment of minimum rates for female learners necessitated a considerable rise in their wages. In consequence, employers have told us either that they had dismissed some of their

¹ For the effect of the establishment of minimum rates on the employment of homeworkers, see Chapter VI, pp. 74-82.

learners or that they were not taking on so many new ones.¹ And a frequent result has been the exercise of more care in the selection of the girls, those thought not to be worth the minimum wage being sent away after a short trial. Another result is the engagement of girls at a younger age. Previously girls of eighteen, twenty or even more might be taken on, after, perhaps, domestic service or work in another kind of factory. Employers tell us that this is now much more difficult (though the practice has not been entirely given up²). "We used to take girls of seventeen or eighteen as learners, now we take only girls of fourteen." "The Act has hit the learners over fourteen very hard; no learners can be taken on over a certain age as their fingers are too stiff to come up to the standard when they reach eighteen years." "It is almost impossible to employ learners over twenty-one, as 6s. is too much to pay to workers who are really earning nothing." "No girl can be worth 13s. after twelve months."

An important point to consider is the age at which learners are being dismissed. In fixing minimum rates for learners at different ages there is always a danger lest, if the increases at any age are too rapid, learners will be dismissed at that age, and younger ones taken on in their place. On this point interesting figures have been collected by the Trade Board. In an inquiry which they made in the spring of 1914 information was obtained as to the age

¹ Occasionally the reverse process takes place, learners being substituted for adults. "In one large factory [in London]," reports a Lady Factory Inspector in 1913, "where no young persons had been entered in the register between 1908 and 1912, they are now being taken on freely, and the manager attributed this change of policy to the regulations laid down by the Paper Box Board. . . . But," she continues, "on the whole the feeling of occupiers and managers appeared (and especially in workshops) to be strongly against the employment of young persons under eighteen; and since the coming in of the Trade Boards Act, which required a closer attention to profits, they had ceased to employ any" (Report of Chief Inspector of Factories for 1913, p. 73).

² Of the 4,278 learners in Great Britain who entered the trade during the year 1913, 3 per cent. were over 20, and another 5 per cent. were between 18 and 20 (Trade Board Papers, No. 32 of 1914).

at entry and the length of service of 2,066 learners to whom certificates had been issued since the minimum rates were fixed, but who had left the boxmaking trade. The results are given in Table VI.

These figures do not, of course, offer any data for comparison with earlier years, and it is impossible, therefore, to tell from them whether more learners are leaving the trade now than before the fixing of minimum rates. The figures show, however, that there does not seem to be any tendency to dismiss learners at the later ages when they are entitled to a higher wage. Only 12 per cent. of those who left the trade had served for a period of two years or over; 67 per cent. had been in the trade less than a year, and 80 per cent. less than eighteen months. That is to say, the great majority of learners who leave the trade (either of their own accord or because they have been dismissed) do so after a short experience, either because they do not like the work or because they are unsuited to it. If now there is a tendency for learners to be dismissed after a shorter trial when they are unfitted for the work—a result which, as we have already remarked, is ascribed by employers to the establishment of minimum rates—the learner gains, for she is dismissed at an age when it is easier for her to obtain a training in some other trade for which she is more fitted.

As a matter of fact, though the Trade Board's determination has led to a certain number of female learners being dismissed, this cannot have happened to any very great extent. The total number of learners in the trade has increased, for in March 1912 the number employed by those firms which made returns was 7,972, while two years later it was 9,065.¹ The proportion of learners to workers remained about the same.

With regard to male learners, however, there has been

¹ Trade Board Papers, No. 33 of 1914. The employers who did not send returns were those who did not apply for learnership certificates.

TABLE VI
Length of Service of Learners who left the Box Trade between March 1912 and May 1914.

Length of Experience.	Age at Entry.						Total.	Percent- age.
	12 to 13.	13 to 14.	14 to 15.	15 to 16.	16 to 17.	17 to 18.		
Under 6 months	4	63	490	141	59	39	32	47
6 months—1 year	5	43	279	76	63	27	12	528
1 year—18 months	5	39	119	46	29	9	6	476
18 months—2 years	2	18	93	28	12	7	1	256
2 years—2½ years	2	11	61	18	15	3	1	127
2½ years—3 years.	0	13	34	5	5	1	1	81
3 years—3½ years	1	9	25	17	11	5	1	54
3½ years—4 years.	0	4	5	5	5	1	1	28
4 years and over.	2	5	11	11	11	1	1	19
Total . . .	21	205	1,129	319	184	85	60	100.0
Percentage . .	10	9.9	54.7	15.5	8.9	4.1	2.9	100.0

a reduction in numbers, as is shown by the following figures which have been supplied to us by the Trade Board—

TABLE VII
Number of Male Learners.

No. of Male Workers.	Total.	Number over 21 years.	Number under 21 years.	Percentage under 21 years.
September 30, 1912 . .	3,671	2,418	1,253	34·13
March 31, 1913 . .	3,407	2,493	914	26·82
March 31, 1914 . .	3,997	2,958	1,041	26·04

Probably the reduction has been chiefly in the number of youths of eighteen to twenty years. As we have seen, the Trade Board's determination has made practically no difference in the wages paid to younger boys, and there is little reason, therefore, to suppose that they have been dismissed on account of the minimum rates. In only one firm, indeed, have we heard of any reduction in the number of boys employed. In this case previously many boys had been taken on for whom no work could be found at a later age. Partly as the result of the establishment of the minimum rates, but partly also apparently because of the policy of the employer, who wished to put a stop to this "blind alley" employment, the work was reorganised and fewer boys were employed, a result, of course, wholly to the good. But the minimum rates fixed for youths of from eighteen to twenty necessitated in some districts a considerable increase in the wages paid to them. Hence, though we have not come across any actual instances of dismissals, it is probable that they have taken place. In several cases we have been told that boys of twenty-one will be or are being dismissed; to this point we shall recur later.

Adult Workers.—The most serious question is, of course, the dismissal of adult workers. This danger was present to

the minds of the framers of the Trade Boards Act, and provision was made in the Act to guard against it. Apart from the workers who are actually infirm or physically disabled, for whom permits of exemption from the operation of the Act may be issued, pieceworkers who, while physically fit, are yet slow or inefficient, are protected by the clause which enacts that the piece-rates must be sufficient to yield as much as the minimum time-rate to the *ordinary* worker. Workers who are below the average in capacity may receive less than the minimum time-rate without risk to the employer, provided that the piece-rates which they are paid are such as to yield at least the minimum to the ordinary worker. As we have seen, the Trade Board has laid down as a guiding rule that the proportion of workers who may be expected to be *sub-ordinary* is 15 per cent. By this means the incentive to dismiss slow workers is considerably diminished, though it is not, of course, entirely removed. To what extent dismissals have occurred we attempt to show in Table VIII.

It will be seen that out of ninety-six firms, employing some 6,800 women workers, only thirty-two replied that they had dismissed any of their women, the number affected being not more than 300, or about 4·4 per cent. The numbers dismissed are, it must be admitted, only a very rough estimate, for it was frequently difficult to get a more precise answer than that "several," "a few," or "one or two" had been dismissed. There is reason to believe that in some cases the number discharged was greater than the employer admitted. And in other cases, when the employer himself, perhaps, had dismissed none of his workers, he declared that other firms were discharging large numbers. "The Act has hit the inefficient worker," said a Birmingham employer, "and large firms are discharging them frequently." "Inefficient workers are being dismissed all round," said another employer in the Midlands; "I have had numbers sent to me to employ, but it is impossible to do so if the minimum wage of 13s. is to be paid." The

proportion of dismissals seem, as might naturally be expected, to be greatest in towns such as Birmingham and Norwich, where the Trade Board's determination caused a considerable increase in wages. In Birmingham a worker

TABLE VIII
Dismissals of Women¹ Workers.

	Total No. of Firms giving information.	No. of Firms who dismissed		Approximate No. of women employed.	Approximate No. of women dismissed.	Percentage dismissed.
		no women workers.	some women workers.			
London	37	25	12	over 3000	between 120 & 150	4 or 5
Norwich.	6	2	4	about 200	not more than 40	not more than 20
Birmingham and District	23	15	8	about 850	about 80	about 10
Bristol	3	2	1	about 400	1	less than 1
Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Nottingham	20	15	5	about 960	about 20	about 2
Newcastle, Manchester, Liverpool and Warrington	7	5	2	about 1400	5 or 6	less than 1
	96	64	32	about 6800	not more than 300	

told us that there had been "a great shift round" among the employees, owing partly to the many dismissals of slow workers, partly to the greater alertness of the more efficient workers in trying to better themselves. But, on the whole, it would appear that up to June 1914, at any rate, the establishment of minimum rates had not led

¹ i.e. excluding learners.

to any large displacement of labour. The most serious case that has come to our notice was the dismissal of 30 or 40 from a firm employing about 50, but this, apparently, was not mainly due to the Trade Board's determination. In another firm 25 per cent. (6 out of 24) and in another 33 per cent. (about 5 out of 15) of the workers had been dismissed. Usually, however, the number discharged by any one firm was very small. And it must be remembered that these dismissals as a rule took place gradually, the weeding-out process being spread over a considerable period. Moreover, as was shown in the case of the tailoring trade, the dismissal of workers from one firm does not necessarily mean that they are permanently excluded from the industry. Cases have, of course, occurred where the worker has had to give up boxmaking altogether, but our impression is that such instances are quite exceptional. Owing to the rapid growth of the boxmaking trade in the last few years it has been difficult to secure enough workers. "It is no use to discharge slow workers," said one employer, "for we could not get any one better." A London employer who expressed the opinion that other firms had discharged large numbers, yet said that at the time he was himself advertising for hands and could not get as many as he wanted. And a representative worker told us that, though there had been many dismissals in her district, there was such a demand for boxmakers that they easily found work again. What will happen in a time of trade depression is, of course, a different matter.

With regard to male workers there is some evidence to show that youths of twenty-one years of age are being dismissed. Objection is very generally taken to the sudden rise in wages at the age of twenty-one. "Boys will be dismissed at twenty-one, and are being dismissed now. The rise is too sudden." "It is a great mistake to give boys a rise of 5s. at the age of twenty-one. The boys who are not worth the full wage of 26s. will be turned off just when they reach that age and it will be impossible

for them to get a job." "I have to send away boys at the age of twenty-one because I cannot afford to pay them the full wage." To what extent the dismissals suggested by such statements will take place it is, of course, too early to predict. Apart from these youths, the Trade Board's determination seems to have caused the discharge of a few older men who were in many cases doing work which could equally well have been done by boys. Thus in a London firm four men who had been doing only boys' work were dismissed. But the number of dismissals of adult men does not appear to be large.¹ Out of 88 firms that we visited, employing some 900 men, only 5 stated that they had discharged any, and the number affected was not more than 2 per cent. altogether. Some of these firms, however, *i. e.* many of those in London and all those in Birmingham, were visited between January and July 1913—that is, at a time when the minimum rates for men, though fixed, had not yet been made obligatory—and two or three employers stated that they would be obliged to dismiss male workers. As might be expected, it is in the districts where the general level of men's wages is low and where consequently the fixing of a minimum wage of 6d. an hour has meant a considerable increase that we have met with most instances of dismissals. In a town in Northamptonshire one firm had discharged two men and a youth and had replaced them by girls; in a Norwich firm, where two men were employed in assisting on a cutting machine, one was sent away while the other was put to other work, at which he did not come under the Trade Board, and their places were taken by young girls; a Nottingham employer stated

¹ As we have already pointed out (see *ante*, p. 38 *n.*), some employers have reorganised their work so that men who were previously engaged during part of their time on work which would bring them within the scope of the Trade Board's determination are now confined to work which falls outside its scope and are therefore not entitled to receive the minimum of 6d. an hour. The incentive to dismiss them is thus, of course, removed.

that he had dismissed an odd man who had been receiving only about 16s. a week before the Act, and he thought that other employers in Nottingham had done the same.

Our general impression from the evidence which has come before us is that, while a certain number of adult workers have been dismissed, the appearance of anything like unemployment on a serious scale, as a result of the minimum rates, has not yet taken place and is not likely to take place in the future. The belief that those below a certain standard of capacity would be "squeezed out," and that the number so displaced would be considerable, rests upon an assumed fixity and stationariness of industrial relationship which does not, in fact, exist. On the one hand, there are very few workers of whom it can be said that they are and must always be "inefficient." The inefficiency ascribed to them is relative to the conditions under which they work. When those conditions are altered through the advance in wages brought about by the Trade Board, the result is often the introduction of further changes such as have been described in Chapter IV, which enable them to earn the minimum rates without difficulty. On the other hand, irrespective of any effects which can be ascribed to the minimum rates, the personnel of every industry is constantly changing in the ordinary course of events through the entry into the trade of young workers and the departure from it of those of an advanced age. If for some reason the industry ceases to expand in the future at the same speed as during the last ten years, or if a given output can be produced by fewer workers than hitherto, what is to be anticipated is not the wholesale dismissal of persons already employed in it, but some diminution in the number of learners by whom the trade is recruited. In fact, however, the use of cardboard boxes is growing so rapidly that even that contingency appears at present unlikely to happen to any great extent.

VI

THE EFFECT OF THE MINIMUM RATES ON HOMEWORK

(i) THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF HOMEWORK

THE question what effect the fixing of minimum rates has had upon the homeworkers is in some respects easier to answer in the case of boxmakers than it was for the workers in the tailoring industry. In the first place, the number of homeworkers is far smaller. Whereas the homeworkers in the tailoring trade number some 20,000, in boxmaking, as we have seen, there are only about 2,000, and they are confined almost entirely to two centres of the industry, London and Birmingham.¹ In the tailoring industry the work is often given out to the homeworkers by middlemen, while the homeworker herself not infrequently distributes part of the work to other homeworkers. Boxmaking does not lend itself to such a subdivision of processes as tailoring. As a rule the homeworker takes out work direct from the ultimate employer, and, though occasionally she may pass on some of the work to another woman,² in the majority of cases she completes it herself (perhaps with the assistance of other members of the family). And not only is the relation of the homeworker to the employer less complex,

¹ In 1912, out of about 2,030 homeworkers, 1,802 were in London, 184 in Birmingham, and 27 in Redditch.

² Thus we met with the case of a woman who found it more convenient to receive work from another homeworker than from the factory because she preferred to take it only in small quantities.

but the kind of work is less varied than in the tailoring industry. At the top of the scale are the fancy box makers, who have probably been little affected by the minimum rates. At the bottom of the scale are the makers of common matchboxes, to whom the Trade Board's determination has meant a very considerable rise in earnings. Slightly above these are the vesta matchbox makers. Between these two extremes are the makers of plain cardboard boxes—boot boxes, fountain pen boxes, boxes for haberdashery, stationery boxes, and a host of other varieties. As was found in the tailoring industry, the homeworkers are mainly married women¹ or widows, whose domestic circumstances or, perhaps, whose lack of speed prevent them from working in the factory. The ages and conditions as to marriage of 330 of these box-makers in London² are given in the following tables—

TABLE IX

Ages of Homeworkers.

		No.	Percentage.
20 years and under	25	6	1·8
25	"	34	10·3
30	"	67	20·0
35	"	61	18·5
40	"	54	16·4
45	"	25	7·8
50	"	26	7·9
55	"	21	6·4
60	"	24	7·3
65	"	4	1·2
70 and over	.	8	2·4
		330	100·0

¹ The homeworkers are practically all women. Out of 1,579 homeworkers employed in boxmaking in London on March 31, 1914, only one was a male. The women are, of course, not infrequently assisted by their husbands.

² In Birmingham, out of 42 homeworkers, 34 were married, 6 were widowed and 2 were single.

TABLE X

Conditions of Homeworkers in respect of Marriage.

	No.	Percentage.
Single	19	5·8
Married	258	78·2
Widows	53	16·0
	<hr/> 330	<hr/> 100·0

It will be seen that the great majority of the women are married or widowed, but the proportion of elderly women (only 33 per cent. are over 45) is less than among the tailoresses. Many of the latter have picked up the trade late in life when driven to do so by stress of circumstances. But among the boxmakers the great majority have worked at the trade since their youth. Boxmaking, in fact, seems to be very largely an occupation which runs in families. The old lady who told us that she had had eighteen children and had brought them all up to boxmaking may be regarded as an extreme example, but frequently other members of the homeworker's family are found to be boxmakers or boxcutters, while to the question, "How did you learn your trade?" the reply constantly received was, "I have worked at it since a child," or "I picked it up from my mother," or "I was born into it." The reason for this is, of course, not far to seek. Since "turning in" is an easy process, children were pressed into the service at a very early age to help their mothers and they naturally continued at the same trade. This practice, which was very prevalent ten or twenty years ago, is happily far less common now.¹

Table XI shows the proportion of homeworkers who

¹ It is, of course, not entirely abandoned. We found one case where a child was regularly kept at home from school one day a week to help her mother make boxes.

are partially or entirely supported by their husbands or children, and those who are dependent on their own exertions—

TABLE XI
Homeworkers' Reasons for Working.

Reasons for Working.	Number.	Percentage.
<i>Dependent on own work (or on outside help)—</i>		
To support herself (includes widows without dependent children)	48	
To support herself and family (widows, separated wives, husbands disabled)	39	
	87	29.9
<i>Partly dependent on own work—</i>		
Husband's work irregular	60	
Husband's earnings insufficient, or too many children	33	
Husband out of work	9	
	102	35.05
<i>Not dependent at all upon own work</i>	102	35.05
	291	100.0

It will be seen that close upon one-third are entirely dependent upon their own earnings (or on outside help), just over one-third are partly dependent, the husband's and children's earnings being insufficient to support the family, while the same proportion are not dependent at all upon their own exertions, but work "to pass the time like," or "to make things more comfortable," or to obtain extras, such as smart clothes for the children or a holiday for the family. But, though a considerable proportion of the homeworkers state that they are not obliged to work, these households are as a rule comparatively poor. Occasionally a woman is found working at boxmaking because she finds the work attractive. "I shall miss the glue brush," regretfully remarked one homeworker whose

husband had just secured a good situation on a railway which necessitated the removal of the household to a distance from the boxmaking centres. Usually, however, a man who can afford to maintain a fairly comfortable home will not tolerate the smell of glue there. But while, on the one hand, the boxmakers are, generally speaking, poorer than the "right-out" workers or the machinists among the tailoresses, they are, on the other hand, not quite so helpless as the worst paid class of "finishers." Among the boxmakers the proportion who had never heard of the Trade Boards Act was much smaller than among the tailoresses, and a greater proportion were enthusiastic as to the benefits which the Act had conferred.

(ii) EARNINGS OF HOMEWORKERS

It is when we consider the earnings of homeworkers that the failure to fix general minimum piece-rates appears most regrettable. To enforce the payment of a minimum time-rate is, in the case of the homeworkers, a task of great difficulty. Not only is there the problem, which is met also in the case of the factory worker, of deciding whether the particular homeworker is an "ordinary" worker. There is the added difficulty—often the impossibility—of discovering how many hours she works. The disadvantages entailed by the absence of a general minimum piece-list have been felt so acutely that, as we have seen,¹ a determined effort has recently been made to draw up such a list. The obstacles in the way of fixing universal piece-rates proved insuperable, but a list of suggested piece-rates for the kinds of cardboard boxes most usually made by homeworkers in London and Birmingham was drawn up, for the guidance of employers and investigating officers. These rates have been proposed too recently for it to be possible yet to say what effect they

¹ See *ante*, pp. 19, 20.

will have on the homeworker's earnings. The information set forth in the following pages was collected during the spring and summer of 1914.¹ Three hundred and thirty homeworkers, employed by thirty-two firms, were visited in London.²

How far the Trade Board's determination has caused an increase in piece-rates³ is shown in the following table—

TABLE XII

Effect of Trade Board on Earnings of Homeworkers.

	Piece-rates raised.		No change.	Piece-rates lowered.	Unable to tell.	Total.
	All raised.	Some raised.				
Cardboard Box Makers . . .	82	46	93 ⁴	5	43	269
Matchbox Makers . . .	61	—	—	—	—	61
	143	46	93	5	43	330

It will be seen that, setting aside the forty-three workers⁵ who were unable to tell what had been the effect of the Trade Board's determination, 143 of the remainder (including

¹ In some cases the workers were visited after the outbreak of war, but in all these cases care was taken to obtain information as to what had been the effect of the Trade Board's determination *before* war broke out. It was, of course, especially necessary to ascertain this in inquiring what had been the effect on employment.

² We were unfortunately not able to make any full inquiry into the effect of the Trade Board's determination on homeworkers in Birmingham. Only 42 homeworkers were visited there. Of these, 26 stated that they had had their piece-rates raised, 16 that there had been no change. They were visited in the first half of 1913.

³ Apart from the effect of the new piece-rates which have been suggested, advances are, of course, continually taking place as the result of correspondence with the Trade Board authorities.

⁴ In two of these cases the piece-rates were raised when the Trade Board's determination was issued, but were later lowered again.

⁵ Most of these forty-three were either new hands or had changed employers since the minimum rates were fixed.

all the matchbox makers), or 50 per cent., had had their rates raised on all kinds of boxes which they made; forty-six others, or 16 per cent., had experienced a rise in rates on some kinds of work. In ninety-three cases, or 32·4 per cent., the rates had not been changed,¹ while five said that their piece-rates had been reduced. At first sight these results would appear to be not unsatisfactory. It will be remembered that, when discussing the effect of the minimum rates on the indoor workers, we pointed out that probably some 67 per cent. of the women were earning less than the minimum time-rate prior to the Trade Board's determination and that, making allowance for slow workers, about 52 per cent. ought therefore to have their earnings raised.² That 50 to 66 per cent. of the homeworkers should have had their piece-rates raised might be taken as *prima facie* evidence that the Trade Board's determination is being to a great extent observed. But there still remains the question how far the piece-rates, even when raised, represent the minimum time-rate. This question we have attempted to answer in Table XIII. These figures must be read with some reservations. It was easy to obtain an accurate answer as to whether or no piece-rates had been raised, for such an occurrence was not likely to be forgotten. But to ascertain the rate of earnings per hour was, of course, a much more difficult matter. Our impression is, however, that the figures may be taken as representing a substantially accurate picture of the state of affairs. It will be objected that the workers would naturally over-estimate the length of time it takes them to do the work and therefore underestimate their hourly earnings, but as a matter of fact such a tendency is by no means general. It is probable that not a few of the workers declared that they could earn the minimum through fear of being dismissed if they admitted that they could not do so. Employers have in

¹ In forty-five cases where the piece-rates had not been changed the workers stated that they were able to earn the minimum time-rate.

² See *ante*, p. 33.

several cases pasted a slip in the work books telling the workers to notify the forewoman if they cannot earn 3d. an hour on the piece-rates. This seems to be interpreted by some workers at any rate as a threat that they will be dismissed if they cannot earn the minimum, and they are therefore in mortal terror of making any admission which may prejudice their chance of employment. A woman of thirty-four, a trained and very quick worker, stated that she had timed herself carefully and found that she could not do a gross, for which she received 10½d. nett, in less than five hours, but she implored our investigator not to tell the employer that she could not earn 3d. an hour, as it would mean that she would be dismissed.

TABLE XIII

Number of Homeworkers able to earn the Minimum Rate.

	Able to earn Minimum.	Able on some of the work.	Not able to earn Minimum.	Total.
<i>Under 45.</i>				
Ablebodied	{ trained untrained	86 11	22 2	43 11 151 24
Delicate or Infirm	{ trained untrained	6 2	3 —	16 2 25 4
	Total	105	27	72 204
<i>Over 45.</i>				
Ablebodied	{ trained untrained	25 1	10 1	20 6 55 8
Delicate or Infirm	{ trained untrained	4 —	1 —	25 3 30 3
	Total	30	12	54 96
	Grand Total.	135	39	126 300

Table XIII shows that out of 300 homeworkers 126, or 42 per cent., say that they cannot earn the minimum,

while 39 others, or 13 per cent., can only earn it on some kinds of work, the proportion being, as might be expected, greater among the elderly, infirm or untrained workers. It would appear that very few of the employers from whose workers we obtained information have fixed *all* their piece-rates so as to yield the minimum time-rate. The workers themselves seem to acquiesce in this. "I have to take the bad with the good" was a remark frequently heard. But of course, according to the Trade Boards Act, *each* piece-rate ought to be high enough to yield not less than 3d. an hour to the ordinary worker. Unfortunately it is the woman who is most dependent on her earnings and to whom an adequate wage is of the most vital importance who is driven to accept the worst paid work; those who are somewhat more favourably situated can afford to take risks and refuse work on which they cannot earn the minimum.

Table XIII deals with homeworkers as a whole. If the figures for matchbox makers are considered separately, the percentage earning the minimum is far smaller. Among the makers of vesta matchboxes the proportion is much the same as among the cardboard box makers, but out of thirty-three makers of common matchboxes only six stated that they could earn as much as 3d. an hour. This is all the more remarkable when it is considered that, as shown in Table XII, all these workers have had their piece-rates raised. The reason lies partly in the fact that the common matchbox makers are, on the whole, of a more advanced age¹ than the other homeworkers and therefore probably slower, partly in the fact that the piece-rates have been fixed at too low a level. For three out of the four firms by whom the matchbox makers whom we visited were employed, special minimum piece-rates had been fixed by the Trade Board. The circumstances of the matchbox makers were in some respects peculiar.

¹ See *post*, p. 81.

Foreign competition in this branch was very keen. To raise the piece-rates much above the low level that prevailed would, it was felt, lead to the firms concerned abandoning the making of matchboxes altogether, thus throwing large numbers of homeworkers out of employment. The rates, therefore, had to be carefully scrutinised and finally seem to have been fixed at a level which could barely yield 3d. an hour to any but exceptionally quick workers. Even so they represented a very considerable increase on the old rates.¹ The common matchbox makers, low as their earnings still are, seem, indeed, to have been among the greatest gainers by the Trade Board.

If the figures in Table XIII may be taken as accurate they show a far from satisfactory state of affairs. It may be objected that a large proportion of the homeworkers are "sub-ordinary" workers and therefore not entitled to earn the minimum rate. The question who ought to be considered an "ordinary" homeworker was discussed at some length in the Report on the Tailoring Industry. Is the homeworker to be compared with the standard prevailing among homeworkers or with the standard of the factory? Now it may be urged with some justification that since the homeworkers contain a larger proportion than the indoor hands of women who are elderly, infirm or slow, the percentage who are allowed to earn less than the minimum rate should be greater than in the factory. This, however, would not account for the fact that, out of 151 women who are trained, ablebodied and under forty-five, no fewer than 43, or 28.5² per cent., should be earning less than 3d. an hour, while twenty-two others, or another 14

¹ The special minimum piece-rates fixed by the Trade Board for match and tack boxes were 2½d., 2¾d., 3d., or 3½d. per gross according to the kind of box; these rates, according to the information given us by one employer, represented an increase of from 20 to 33 per cent. For vesta boxes the rates fixed varied from 4d. to 8d., representing in the same firm an increase of from 8 to 39 per cent.

² Of these forty-three, fifteen were working for one employer.

per cent., cannot earn 3d. on some kinds of work. Clearly these women, or at any rate the great majority of them, ought to be earning the minimum. If they were working in the factory they would presumably be able to earn it. It is the duty of the employer so to organise his factory that his workers may be able to earn a living wage. If he chooses to employ homeworkers, and thus save himself the expense of extra factory accommodation, machinery and supervision, he ought to adjust his piece-rates so that they may be sufficient to compensate the homeworker for the lack of these advantages. This, it may be noted, was the conclusion of the committee which recently drew up a list of special piece-rates for homeworkers in London and Birmingham, for they expressly based the proposed rates on "*the capacity of an ordinary worker working under the conditions which are ordinary in the case of homeworkers.*"¹ As we have said, it is difficult to speak with absolute certainty about the homeworker's rate of earning, owing to the constant interruptions to which her work is liable, but there seem to be grounds for thinking that the rate of 3d. an hour is not yet in practice a minimum for the "*ordinary worker.*"

(iii) EMPLOYMENT OF HOMEWORKERS

Though the Trade Board's determination cannot yet be said to be universally observed, there is no doubt that it has caused a very considerable increase in the earnings of the homeworkers. There still, however, remains the question, has this advantage been counterbalanced by a diminution of employment? We may remark that even if this has been the result it does not necessarily follow that the establishment of a minimum wage has proved an evil. The system of homework has little to recommend it. The fact that in most centres of the boxmaking industry

¹ Appendix to Minutes of Trade Board, July 9 and 10, 1914.

it is practically unknown, and that even in the areas where it prevails many employers successfully dispense with it,¹ supports the conclusion already put forward in the Report on the Tailoring Trade, that it is not an indispensable adjunct to factory production. Homework is only profitable where low earnings or casual employment among men drive large numbers of married women into the labour market in order to supplement the family income. The presence of these hosts of women willing to take out work at any price saves the employer the trouble and expense of providing additional factory accommodation and supervision. The employment of homeworkers is the line of least resistance. But there is no real obstacle which prevents the employer organising his work without them, and the total abandonment of homework would be a gain to the industry as a whole. To the homeworkers themselves the change, if sudden, would be disastrous. But if it came about slowly, if no new homeworkers were taken on and the system gradually died out with the present generation, *and if at the same time the conditions of male labour were improved, so that homework should no longer be a necessity, as it so often is at present*, little distress need be entailed.

It must be noted that the Trade Board has not been the only influence at work. The Insurance Act, which came into operation about the same time as the minimum rates were fixed, has most certainly tended to restrict the employment of homeworkers. Some firms seem to have decided that their homeworkers were not worth employing

¹ In London, out of 225 employers who made returns to the Trade Board as to the number of workers they employed on March 31, 1912, only 110, or 49 per cent., employed homeworkers. In Birmingham the proportion was 42·5 per cent. (31 out of 73 firms). In seven cases in London and one case in Birmingham, no women workers were employed indoors. A few men were employed to cut the cardboard or chip (or this was done by the employer himself), and the boxes were then given out to be made by women working at home.

unless they could turn out a given amount of work a week.¹ But even before the Insurance Act, homework was being gradually ousted by the growing use of machinery. In 1907, when the Women's Industrial Council made an inquiry into the boxmaking industry, they found that the tendency was for the cheaper boxes to be made more and more in the factory by machinery instead of by homeworkers.

To what extent this reduction in the number of homeworkers was taking place it is, unfortunately, impossible to determine owing to the absence of reliable statistics prior to 1912.² But that the number has diminished to

¹ Several employers in London seem, when the Insurance Act first came into operation, to have dismissed workers who could not earn as much as 10s. a week. Under the Insurance Act the contributions to be paid for outworkers might be determined by reference to the amount of work actually done instead of the weeks in which the work was done. This provision was, however, not generally known, and, if known, was frequently difficult to apply; in consequence there was a tendency to dismiss slow workers and concentrate the work in fewer hands, for the employer was naturally averse to paying a weekly contribution for an outworker who, perhaps, only brought in a few shillings' worth of work a week. Later regulations made the "unit method" more workable. A contribution was to be paid for each "unit of work" done by the homeworker—in the boxmaking trade, 12s. worth—irrespective of the length of time it might take her to complete this amount. If an employer adopted this system it mattered little to him whether the work was performed by a few quick workers or a larger number of slow workers. Consequently many workers who had been dismissed because they could not earn 10s. a week were taken on again. A certain number will, however, have been permanently displaced.

² In the Census of 1901 paper and cardboard box makers are not separately enumerated; 1,950 are returned in England and Wales (in Scotland homework is practically non-existent in the boxmaking trade) as "working at home" in paper box and bag making combined (Census of England and Wales, 1901, Summary Tables, pp. 196, 197). In 1907 the Chief Factory Inspector estimated that the number of homeworkers engaged in the two occupations was 2,572, an estimate which can only be taken as approximately correct, since some employers sent in a list of their outworkers twice during the year, some only once (Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories on Workshops, Outwork, etc., in the year 1907, Cd. 4633 of 1909, p. 14). In the Census of Production in the same year, which, however, did not cover the whole of the industry, 1,408 homeworkers were returned as engaged in boxmaking only (Census of Production,

some extent since that date would appear from the half-yearly returns made to the Trade Board. According to these returns the numbers of homeworkers in London and Birmingham were as follows—

TABLE XIV (a)

Number of Homeworkers employed.

	London.			Birmingham.		
	(a) No. of Firms making returns.	(b) No. of Homeworkers employed. ¹	(c) No. of Female indoor workers employed.	(d) No. of Firms making returns.	(e) No. of Homeworkers employed. ¹	(f) No. of Female indoor workers employed.
March 31, 1912	225	1,802	7,247	73	184	1,779
Sept. 30, 1912	239	1,500	7,174	85	223	2,240
March 31, 1913	259	1,369	7,842	89	160	2,065
Sept. 30, 1913	281	1,686	8,369	92	179	2,177
March 31, 1914	321	1,579	8,772	89	177	2,098

It will be seen that, though the number of firms making returns was greater in March 1914 than in March 1912, the number of homeworkers was less. At the same time the

1907, p. 643). These figures also are only approximate. The Census of 1911 gives 1,148 as the number of cardboard box makers working at home (1,115 women and 33 men) (Census of England and Wales, 1911, Vol. X, Part I, pp. 20, 21). This figure must obviously be an understatement; the number could not have decreased to such an extent since 1907, seeing that there were over 2,000 in 1912 (see *ante*, p. 64).

¹ As we have already mentioned (see page 75 n.), a large number of firms both in London and Birmingham do not employ homeworkers. The figures in columns (c) and (f) give the number of indoor workers employed by all the firms who made returns; those in cols. (b) and (e) the number of homeworkers employed by such firms as made use of this method of production (roughly nearly one-half).

number of female indoor workers employed was greater, so that a decline in the number of homeworkers cannot be ascribed to a decrease in trade—indeed, we know from other sources that the boxmaking industry was very busy during these years.

If we take only those firms which made complete returns for each of the half-yearly periods, the figures are—

TABLE XIV (b)

	London.			Birmingham.		
	(a) No. of Firms making returns.	(b) No. of Homeworkers employed.	(c) No. of Female indoor workers employed.	(d) No. of Firms making returns.	(e) No. of Homeworkers employed.	(f) No. of Female indoor workers employed.
March 31, 1912	181	1,664	6,282	55	127	1,565
Sept. 30, 1912	"	1,290	6,236	"	136	1,664 ¹
March 31, 1913	"	1,104	6,282	"	119	1,557
Sept. 30, 1913	"	1,275	6,568	"	106	1,549
March 31, 1914	"	1,179	6,744	"	104	1,565

Here again a decline in the number of homeworkers is seen, while the number of indoor workers remains the same or increases. Incidentally the figures for London point to the greater steadiness of employment inside the factory, for while, after September 1912, the number of indoor workers gradually and steadily increases, the number of homeworkers employed fluctuates.

Ninety of the London firms and 32 of the Birmingham firms in Table XIV (b) did not employ homeworkers in March 1912. Of the remaining 91 in London, 50 continued to em-

¹ The increase at this date was due entirely to a great increase in the numbers employed by one large firm.

ploy about the same number after the fixing of the minimum rates, four actually increased the number to a slight extent, while 37 made a reduction. Of the 23 Birmingham firms, 13 continued to employ about the same number, 2 employed slightly more, and 8 employed less. In most instances the reduction was not serious, but in the case of some of the matchbox making firms (with which we shall deal later) and a dozen of the cardboard box makers in London, the staff of homeworkers employed suffered a considerable diminution. Thus, one cardboard boxmaking firm has reduced its outdoor staff from 168 to 122, another from 39 to 25, a third from 36 to 5, a fourth from 33 to 15, a fifth from 31 to 2, a sixth from 26 to 15, a seventh from 20 to 11, an eighth from 19 to 9, a ninth from 14 to 5, a tenth from 14 to 2, an eleventh from 10 to 3, while a twelfth, which formerly employed 12 homeworkers, has discontinued the system entirely.¹ Of course, where homeworkers are dismissed by one firm it does not necessarily follow that they are thrown out of employment altogether. In some cases they have obtained work from other firms. And some homeworkers have become indoor hands. This, however, is not likely to have taken place in many instances. Domestic circumstances usually render it difficult for the homeworker to enter a factory, while her age or lack of speed make her unsuitable for such employment. Indeed, of all the firms who had made a striking reduction in the number of outworkers since the fixing of the minimum rates, none had increased the number of indoor hands except to a very slight extent.

Apart from a reduction in the numbers employed, those who still remain on the employers' lists may receive less work. In Birmingham, though we were not able to make any extensive inquiry among homeworkers, the impression gained from such employers and workers as were visited is

¹ In Birmingham, in one case a firm which employed seven homeworkers discontinued the practice. In no other case was any considerable reduction made.

that less work is being given out. In London the answers on this point were as follows—

Receiving more work	.	.	.	.	.	.	22
Receiving same amount of work	.	.	.	.	.	.	154
Receiving less work	.	.	.	.	.	.	48
Given up or lost work	.	.	.	.	.	.	14
Changed employers	.	.	.	.	.	.	62
New hands	.	.	.	.	.	.	17
Uncertain	.	.	.	.	.	.	13
							330

It will be seen that, setting aside the 92 homeworkers who could give no information as to the amount of work which their employer was giving out, only 62, or 26 per cent., said that they were receiving less or had given up work, 22 were receiving more work,¹ while 154, or 64·7 per cent., were receiving the same amount.

It is in the making of common matchboxes that the greatest diminution of homework seems to have taken place. This is to be expected since, as we have seen, the minimum rates fixed represented a very considerable rise in this branch of the trade, and the competition of foreign matchboxes is very severe. Before the Trade Boards Act was passed, but largely as a result of the agitation which led up to it, one large matchbox-making firm abolished homework altogether. Another, since the minimum rates were fixed, has reduced its outworkers from 95 to 35, whilst those whom it still employs receive much less work than formerly; a third has reduced its outdoor staff from 386 to 260; while a fourth, which formerly employed 30 homeworkers, now gives out no homework.²

¹ This, it may be remarked, is not always a matter for rejoicing to the homeworker herself. She sometimes does not want to do more than a certain amount of work during the week, and of those who had changed their employers some had done so on this very account. They had deliberately left a good employer and had gone to another who paid lower rates, but who allowed them to take out the work in smaller quantities.

² Two other matchbox-making firms are employing about the same number of homeworkers as before the minimum rates were fixed.

Our impression is, indeed, that the making of cheap match-boxes is gradually dying out as a home industry. We have visited only 33 makers of common matchboxes, and this number is too small for a definite conclusion to be founded on it. But it is remarkable that, out of these 33 women, 27, or 81 per cent., were over forty. Now, as we have said, boxmaking is not a trade often picked up late in life. The great majority of boxmakers have worked at the trade since their youth, and the makers of match-boxes are no exception to this rule.¹ It would seem, therefore, that employers have almost ceased to recruit workers for this branch, and that, as a home industry, it will die out with the present generation of homeworkers. This process, which began, of course, long before the passage of the Trade Boards Act,² is likely to be accelerated by it. As far as the makers of cardboard and vesta

¹ It may be objected that there is another possible explanation for the comparatively advanced age of the matchbox makers. It might be the case that the younger women are engaged in cardboard box making, but that with advancing years and consequent loss of speed they find it difficult to obtain the more remunerative work and are forced to fall back upon the badly paid common matchboxes. We questioned the matchbox makers specially on this point and found that practically all had been engaged all their lives in making match-boxes or tack boxes (which are very similar to matchboxes), having picked up the trade from their mothers. For a cardboard box maker to turn to common matchbox making would be quite exceptional; it would, we were told, be like taking up different work altogether.

² See, for instance, the reference to this industry in the Report on the Relation of Industrial and Sanitary Conditions to Pauperism in London, by A. D. Steel Maitland and Miss R. E. Squire, written in 1906 (Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1909, Appendix, Vol. XVI, p. 25): "Matchbox making is a dying industry. Machine-made boxes are used by the chief lucifer match manufacturers, and these are made at their factories. Formerly the great lucifer manufacturers employed contractors, who supplied them with hand-made matchboxes made in the workers' homes. They still supply some, but a very much reduced quantity. The rate . . . does not appear to have varied for twenty years, as the old hands assure us, but what has altered considerably is the amount of work given out. The matchbox maker who could make her seven gross a day—the usual amount given out at a time—and get this on five days in the week, was much better off than now, when two days a week seems the most that can be secured."

boxes are concerned the change will probably be more gradual.

To sum up, there seems reason to believe that, as far as the homeworkers are concerned, the Trade Board's determination is being to some extent evaded. Out of 300 who gave replies on this point, only 135, or 45 per cent., stated that they could earn the minimum on all kinds of boxes which they were given; 39 others could earn it on some kinds of work. Among the makers of common matchboxes very few could earn it. This is not to say that the homeworkers have not benefited by the fixing of a minimum wage. On the contrary, 50 per cent. of those who gave information had had their piece-rates raised on all kinds of boxes that they made, and another 16 per cent. had experienced a rise in rates on some kinds of work; the matchbox makers had all had their rates raised. Against this must be set a slight contraction of employment, more especially in the case of the matchbox makers. This diminished employment is, however, only due in a small measure to the fixing of a minimum wage. For many years before the Trade Boards Act homework appears to have been on the decline owing to the increasing use of machinery, while a further impetus in this direction was given by the Insurance Act. So far the change has been gradual and does not appear to have occasioned serious hardship. Any considerable diminution of employment would, however, inevitably entail great suffering unless accompanied by an improvement in those conditions of men's labour—low earnings and casual employment—which at present render homework a necessity.

VII

ADMINISTRATION

IN the Report on the Tailoring Industry we discussed at some length the difficulties of the task of enforcing the payment of the minimum rates. Administration is not quite so difficult in the boxmaking as in the tailoring industry. In the first place, the numbers to be dealt with are far smaller. In the second place, the absence of middlemen removes to some extent the opportunities for evasion. But the difficulties are still considerable. The trade is scattered over the whole country and includes very varying types of organisation, from large factories to small workshops. In two of the principal centres of the industry, London and Birmingham, a large number of homeworkers are employed. The conditions prevailing among this class—their helplessness, their ignorance, their lack of intercourse with one another—militate against the successful enforcement of the Trade Board's determinations. Ninety per cent. of the homeworkers whom we interviewed had never been visited by an Inspector, and some had never heard of the Trade Board, though two years had elapsed since the minimum rates had been fixed. Throughout the industry, so far as the women workers and the more poorly paid section of the men are concerned, there is practically no organisation. The Investigating Officers can, therefore, expect little help from the trade unions in searching out cases of evasion. But the main difficulty is, as in the case of the tailoring industry, the absence of minimum piece-lists. If the Trade Board had been able to fix minimum piece-rates, the task of the Investigating Officer would have been much simpler. He would merely have had to compare the piece-

rates which were paid with those which had been fixed by the Board. But since only a minimum time-rate has been fixed he has to determine whether the piece-rates paid by the employer are such as to yield the minimum time-rate to "the ordinary worker." In any individual case he has to decide whether the worker is "ordinary" or not; not only that, he has to determine also whether piece-rates which in one factory may be sufficient to yield the minimum time-rate are sufficient in another factory, under different conditions of management and organisation.

How far are the Trade Board's determinations being evaded? To this question it is, of course, very difficult to give any definite answer, for precisely the same circumstances which hinder the Investigating Officer make it difficult for the outsider to form any reliable opinion. Our impression is that there is a certain amount of evasion, more particularly among the smaller employers and the employers of homeworkers. In Chapter VI we have shown that there is reason to believe that in a considerable number of cases the piece-rates paid to homeworkers are not sufficient to yield the minimum time-rate to the "ordinary" worker. As regards the indoor workers the following figures for the nine months October 1, 1913, to June 30, 1914, will show how many cases of non-compliance with the Trade Board's determinations have been found by Investigating Officers.

Total number of visits paid (in addition to visits in continuation of cases already begun)	336
No irregularity found	131
Notices not posted	45
Piece-rates needing revision	16
Time-rates needing revision	69
Arrears due	66
Cases noted for further inquiry	46
Learners not certified	60
Facilities for learners inadequate	3
Time records found unsatisfactory	47
Wage records found unsatisfactory	19
Permits found to be required	4
Found to be outside scope	5

It will be seen that, out of 336 cases, irregularities of some kind ¹ were discovered in 205, or in nearly two-thirds of them. And lest it should be imagined that the visits were paid by the Investigating Officer on account of complaints received, and that there would therefore be a *prima facie* reason for supposing that the Trade Board's determinations were being infringed, it may be noted that the greater number of the visits, 217 out of 336, were paid on the initiative of the Office, without any complaints being sent; ² in 100 of these cases irregularities were found. In 85 cases out of the 336, or one-fourth, piece-rates or time-rates had to be raised. It will be noted that, though the majority of women workers are employed on piece-work, the cases in which piece-rates were directed to be raised were very few, a proof of the difficulty experienced by the Investigating Officers in deciding whether piece-rates are adequate or no. As a rule, where payment of wages below the minimum was discovered, the underpayment was due, not to wilful disregard of the Act by the employer, but to misapprehension or to carelessness, either on the part of the employer himself or of his subordinate, and it was not considered necessary to resort to stronger action than to require payment of arrears. ³ Only two prosecutions have been undertaken since the minimum rates were fixed. In the first case (May 1913) the employer was charged with underpaying a female worker; a conviction was obtained, and he was fined £3 3s. with £5 5s. costs, and was ordered to pay arrears of 17s. to the worker. In the second case (August 1914) an employer was prosecuted for producing to an Investigating Officer a false record of payments

¹ In many cases, of course, these irregularities were not of a serious nature.

² The visits were, as a rule, not paid at random, but on questions arising from correspondence or from the work of learnership certification.

³ During the period arrears to the amount of £477 3s. 1d. were ordered to be refunded (*i. e.* £179 14s. 1d. to male, and £297 8s. 3d. to female, workers).

to a worker. He was fined £10, with £4 4s. costs (or in default one month's hard labour) and had to pay £12 to the worker in respect of whose wages the false information was given.

There are several ways by which the enforcement of the Trade Board's determinations might be rendered more effective. The staff of inspectors should be greatly increased; the work might be to some extent decentralised and district offices established to which workers might appeal for protection; and the term "ordinary worker" should be defined with greater precision. These and other points have been discussed at considerable length in the Report on the Tailoring Industry and we need do no more here than refer the reader to that Report. As to the inadequacy of the present inspectorate we may quote some figures showing the work of the Investigating Officers, as

	South Midlands.	South-western district.	Scotland.	North-eastern district.	Midlands (Leicestershire and district).	North-western district.	London and South-eastern district.	Manchester district.	North Midlands.	Total.
Employers visited ¹	49	5	5	9	11	6	119	15	12	231
To secure observance of the minimum rates—										
(a) Special	36	4	4	1	6	2	66	4	6	129
(b) Routine	7			1		1	24	3	4	40
In regard to facilities provided for learners	6	1		4	2	1	13	6		33
In regard to applications for Permits of Exemption					1		3			5
To explain the provisions of the Act or the Determinations							3			5
Other matters	3		1	2	1	2	19	4	2	34

¹ The numbers given are the actual numbers of employers visited. Altogether 293 visits were paid to employers. In addition, 57 visits were paid to workers (including 40 to homeworkers) and 3 to other persons, making in all 353 visits.

far as the boxmaking industry is concerned, during the six months October 1, 1913, to March 31, 1914. It must be remembered that there are only ten¹ Investigating Officers (of whom one is engaged continuously in the central office) for the four trades for which minimum rates have been fixed under the Trade Boards Act, to which have now been added the four other trades scheduled in 1913.

Of the 231 employers visited, ninety were visited for the first time. At this rate several years will elapse from the date of fixing the minimum rates before every employer has been visited.

¹ Since this was written two additional officers have been appointed.

VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

FROM the point of view of an experiment in the establishment of a minimum wage the boxmaking industry stands between the chainmaking and the tailoring industries, the subjects of the two previous monographs. The difficulties to be faced are greater than in the chainmaking trade, for the boxmaking industry is scattered over the whole country, and the articles manufactured are very varied. On the other hand, the difficulties are less than in the tailoring trade, for the case is not complicated by the presence of hosts of middlemen. The experience of the boxmaking industry confirms the conclusion derived from the two previous inquiries, viz. that the establishment of a minimum wage can be successfully accomplished without serious economic reactions, such as the loss of employment. It must be remembered, of course, that only a short time has elapsed since the minimum rates were fixed, and that the trade has been very busy during this period. Subject to these reservations it may be useful now to sum up the principal conclusions to which our inquiry has led us—

1. *Women's Wages.*—According to the Report of the Board of Trade on Earnings and Hours of Labour in 1906, some 67 per cent. of the women employed in making boxes of cardboard, etc., were earning less than 3d. an hour. Probably there was little, if any, increase in wages between this date and the fixing of the minimum rates. As the Trade Board has laid down that at least 85 per cent. of the workers in any factory ought now to earn not less

than this amount, it would appear that some 52 per cent. of the workers must have experienced an increase of wages, provided that the Trade Board's determination is being observed. The increase has not taken place equally all over the country; in certain districts, such as Leicester and Nottingham, women's wages have been little affected; in other districts, *e. g.* in the east, the south and some parts of the Midlands, where, prior to the Trade Board's determination, wages were very low, they have been raised considerably. In a few cases where piece-rates have been readjusted some rates have been cut down and occasionally timework has been substituted for piece-work; but there is no general tendency for the minimum to become the maximum. On the contrary, the more highly paid workers have often demanded an increase to correspond with the rise granted to the worse paid, and when piece-rates are raised the quicker workers naturally gain as well as the slower.

2. *Men's Wages.*—It would seem that the Trade Board's determination has made little difference to the skilled men. But a large proportion of the men employed in boxmaking are engaged on unskilled work, and these were, before the fixing of the minimum rate, in many instances being paid at rates far below 6d. an hour.

3. *Learners' Wages.*—The minimum rates fixed for learners have led to a fairly general increase over the whole country in the wages paid to girls. Young boys under 18 have been little affected, but the wages of youths of from 18 to 20 have often had to be raised.

4. *Trade Unionism.*—The establishment of the Trade Board gave at first a great impetus to the voluntary organisation of the workers, and numbers of women joined a trade union. This increased membership, however, has not been maintained.

5. *Conditions of Employment.*—The Trade Board has led employers to organise their work more carefully so that there is less waste of time. The workers are now

less often kept waiting for work. In a few cases hours have been reduced. On the other hand, supervision is stricter and greater punctuality is insisted on. In some cases employers have driven their workers to earn the minimum on inadequate piece-rates by excessive speeding-up.

6. *Prices.*—There has, in the last two or three years, been a rise in the price of boxes. But it has been due principally to the cost of raw materials and can be attributed to only a very small extent to the Trade Board.

7. *Effect of the Minimum Rates on the Industry.*—Certain branches of the trade, particularly the manufacture of some kinds of matchboxes, appear to have suffered from increased foreign competition. On the other hand, the advance in wages has led in many cases to an increased output on the part of the workers, and to closer attention on the part of the employers to questions of training, organisation and machinery. These changes together have tended to keep down the cost of production.

8. *Employment.*—There has been a tendency to dispense with the services of learners, and to dismiss some of the less efficient adult workers, as a result of the minimum rates. There is no sign, however, of unemployment on a serious scale having taken place or being likely to take place. Many of the women who lost their work when the minimum rates were fixed were later taken on by other firms.

9. *Homework.*—Of 287 homeworkers who gave information, 50 per cent. had had their piece-rates raised on all kinds of boxes that they made, and another 16 per cent. had experienced a rise in the rates on some kinds of work. A considerable number appear still to be unable to earn the minimum. Of those questioned on this point, 42 per cent. stated that they could not earn 3d. an hour., while another 13 per cent. could only earn it on some kinds of work. There has been a slight decrease in the number of homeworkers employed, owing partly to the Trade Board,

but partly also, and probably to a greater extent, to the Insurance Act and to the increasing use of machinery which has been taking place for some years irrespective of the establishment of a minimum wage. This decline of homework is seen especially in the case of the common matchbox makers; with regard to other boxmakers the change has been more gradual.

10. *Administration.*—There is a certain amount of evasion of the Trade Board's determinations, more particularly among the smaller employers and those who employ home-workers. This is mainly due to the inadequacy of the staff of Investigating Officers.

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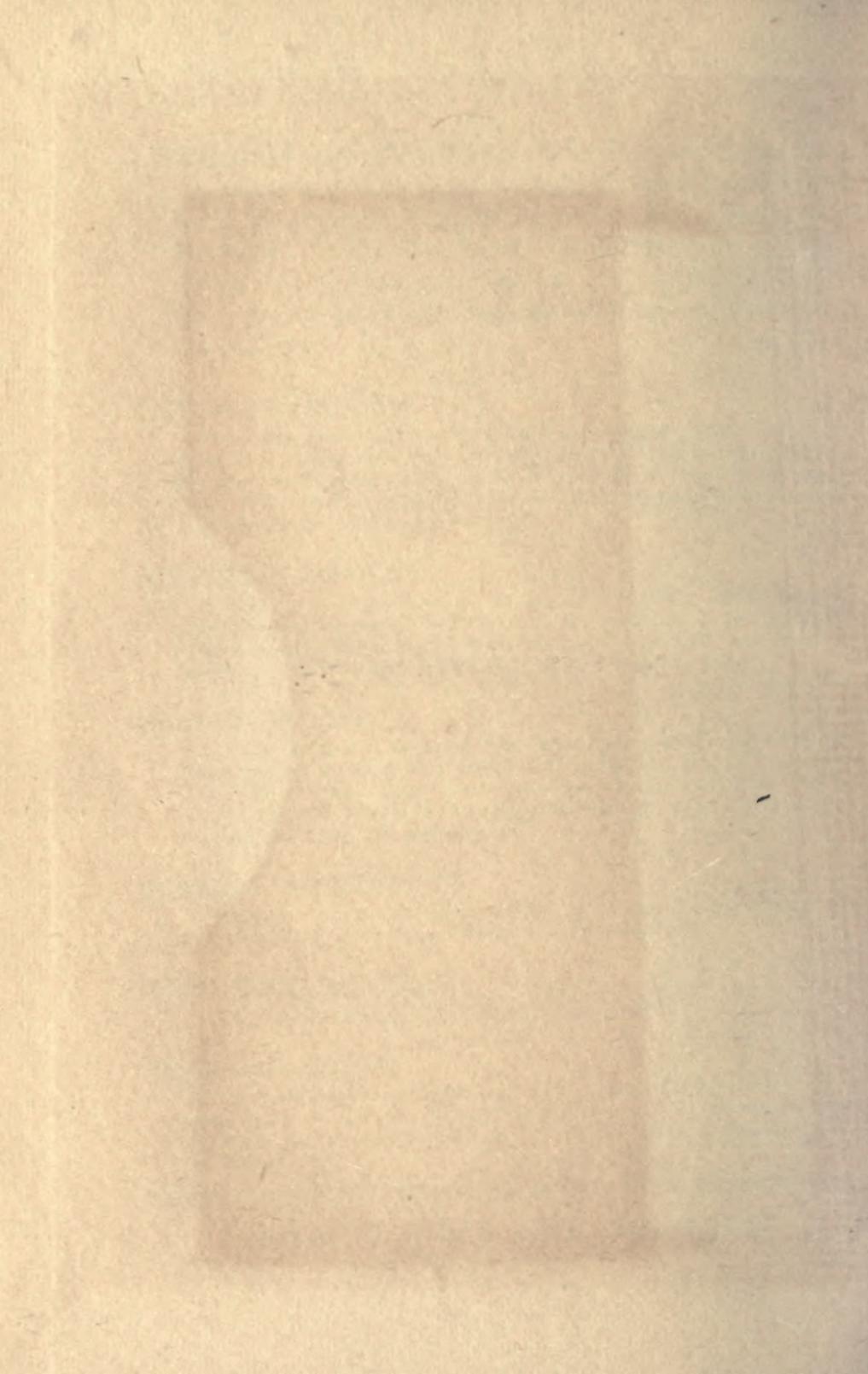
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